

 Klu thar rgyal



An A Mdo Tibetan New Year In 2018

Дружину

[illegible]

 Klu thar rgyal


HOPE, GATHERINGS, AND NEW BEGINNINGS

AN A MDO TIBETAN NEW YEAR IN 2018

၂၅၂၀၆၁၂၂

[illegible]

by

 Klu thar rgyal (Litaijia 李太加)

(3rd Edition)

COVERS

FRONT: Parents make new clothes for their children for Lo sar (2019, oil, Dpal rgyal དཔལ་རྒྱལ་).

BACK: Tibetan cake (2018, created by Kun thar skyid ཀུན་ཐར་སྐྱེད།, decorated by Dpal rgyal དཔལ་རྒྱལ་).

CITATION

Klu thar rgyal (Litaijia). 2023. *Hopes, Gatherings, and New Beginnings: An a mdo Tibetan New Year in 2018*. 3rd edition.

ACCLAIM

Hopes, Gatherings, and New Beginnings: An Amdo Tibetan New Year, Klu thar rgyal's meticulously detailed exploration of Lo sar is comparable to a lively reality program focused on a Tibetan sheep-herding community in a semi-arid region of China's northwest Qinghai Province where modernity and tradition interact in a socially dynamic setting. Emphasizing transitions between old and new ways of life and thought, this young Tibetan author documents his own family's and community's responsibilities during the New Year Lo sar period. From a multi-day series of events, including parties, rituals, and weddings, Klu thar rgyal chooses weddings to illustrate a social-economic dynamic of the cultural integration of tradition and the "fashionable and modern." Mundane daily chores are the essence of this book. It strives to depict the totality of observational focus, introducing essential circumstances of real life and allowing readers to judge and interpret the multiple social aspects of these chores and interactions. For example, the writer's mother's painstaking housework, concern for the family's livestock, and less-than-riveting conversation portray authentic life. The book communicates more - gender inequality and education levels - but without judgment or interpretation. Moreover, the eighty-five captioned photographs offer a graphic visual representation of the content, embedding readers in reality rather than the perhaps romanticized imaginary images. Essential reading for learning more about contemporary Tibetan society as it transitions from rural to urban, from mobile pastoralism to a settled existence, and the impacts of ecological enclosure and compulsory education.

-Gengqiu Gelai (Konchok Gelek,

Dkon mchog dge legs དཀོན་མཆོག་དགེ་ལེགས།) *University of Zurich*

Hopes, Gatherings, and New Beginnings: An Amdo Tibetan New Year is an intimate, exceptionally thorough Tibetan New Year study, providing a day-by-day description of the 2018 Tibetan New Year in the author's pastoral home community in Mang ra (Guinan) County in the southeast of Qinghai Province, PR China. Photographs of people, places, and activities further add to the book's value, providing materials for research analysis and comparison with Lo sar activities in other areas. Klu thar rgyal provides researchers with an exemplary model of recording and presenting their home community's cultural manifestations with photos, illustrations, personal involvement, and discussion.

-Tshe dbang rdo rje ཚེ་དབང་ར་རྟ་རྒྱལ་ (Caixiangduojie 才项多杰)

Qinghai Normal University 青海师范大学

Hopes, Gatherings, and New Beginnings: An Amdo Tibetan New Year is an important book and the most detailed Lo sar 'Tibetan New Year' study in any language to date. The author, Klu thar gyal, a native of Amdo Mtsho lho, conducted a longitudinal study in his home community through interviews, careful observations, richly descriptive narratives, insider perspectives and memories, and powerful images. Notably, the author's qualitative research approach captures details often ignored in the furtherance of research and academic goals. This ethnographic work's richness adds to the array of English-language Tibetan studies and is of immense value to enlivening discussion, particularly among Tibetan readers and Western scholars. Significantly, it challenges readers to reflect on how this Tibetan New Year differs from other Lo sar practices in the vast Tibetosphere. How can arts and media be used to record Tibetan observations? How would you (the Tibetan reader) outline Lo sar for your local community?

-Rinchen Khar (Rin chen mkhar རིན་ཆེན་མཁར་པ།)

University of Massachusetts, Amherst

This collection of intertwined narratives, images, and commentary is essential for those interested in Lo sar 'Tibetan New Year' culture and Amdo Tibetan herding communities in particular. This work speaks to the lack of nuanced, thorough studies of Amdo Lo sar by local Tibetans. The changes and continuities experienced by herders during Lo sar celebrations and practices reflect daily life, providing powerful insight into the broader socio-economic context of their livelihoods.

-Tshe dpal rdo rje ཚེ་དཔལ་ར་རྟེ་། *University of Canterbury*

Klu thar rgyal, a Tibetan raised in his natal herding community and now seeking opportunity in a cosmopolitan city, presents an in-depth description of an Amdo Lo sar, reflecting the essential nature of this traditional festival. Aware of this festival's imminent disappearance as it encounters economic transformation, coupled with his well-informed perspectives on local life, the author admirably achieves his objective - an exceptionally informed treatment of local Tibetan life in transition.

-Dpal ldan bkra shis དཔལ་ལྷན་བཀྲ་ཤིས། *Humboldt University zu Berlin*

Klu thar rgyal provides intimate, firsthand accounts of an Amdo herding community's Lo sar 'Tibetan New Year' and wedding traditions. Careful and precise recording of daily events, experiences before and during Lo sar, and examination of cultural change make this unique text extremely valuable.

-Nyangchak (Snying lcags rgyal སྙིང་ལཱ་གསལ་རྒྱལ།)

Klu thar rgyal's superb autoethnographic account is a detailed reconstruction of his family's Lo sar celebration in an Amdo Tibetan herding community. Although claiming to be only a record of his family's Lo sar activities based on his fieldwork in his natal community in 2018, it is much more with Klu thar rgyal bringing a better appreciation of how Lo sar observations have evolved. In the grip of ongoing transformative social processes since the late 1990s, he chronicles clan-based community life held together by its integrative system of beliefs and practices. Beyond merely portraying one family's Lo sar, this account allows readers to better understand how Tibetan New Year gatherings involve various participation levels, offering a window into the local community's social, religious, and economic life. This series of narratives featuring Klu thar rgyal and community members, along with excellent photographs, present vivid personal accounts, memories, and hopes for the future. As readers, we absorb and remake our memories of people, place, and events, hoping for their and our futures.

-Rin chen rdo rje རིན་ཆེན་རྡོ་རྗེ། *Lanzhou University*

In this essential, detailed record of a Tibetan New Year in a rural pastoral community of Amdo, Klu thar rgyal gives a comprehensive account of the most important local annual festival in diary format, beginning several days before the festival until the fifteenth day of the first lunar month - the last day of the New Year period. Using a broad lens, he presents ethnographic information, including relatives' and friends' social ties, a marriage, a death, a funeral, religious activities, food, housing, horseraces, and his mother's divination practices. Valuably, the writer records social changes and locals' use of electricity, television, smartphones, and social media. Rapid social change inevitably brings loss to traditional lifestyles and values, about which the author expresses concern and disappointment.

-Kelsang Norbu (Gesang Nuobu, Skal bzang nor bu གླ་མ་བཟང་རྣོན་བླ།)

Klu thar rgyal's insider, very personal study of Lo sar/Tibetan New Year in the Amdo herding community of Tsha nag in Mtsho lho is an enjoyable, highly informative read of this critically important Tibetan celebration. Through eating, drinking, and laughing; family reunions; friendships renewed between relatives and community members via reciprocal exchanges of Lo sar gifts; customs of seniority and courtesy; marriage rituals and festivities; religious ceremonies; horse races; illness and hospitalization; local pilgrimages; life on the pastures and in resettled areas; preparing, presenting, and concluding Lo sar; the impact of social media - particularly WeChat - on Lo sar; and more we, the readers, are immersed in the author's world. Like other Tibetan communities, this small, relatively remote community is experiencing profound alterations in transportation and communication with a profound impact on the local people and traditions, including Lo sar. This is essential reading for anyone interested in Tibetan life in the second decade of the twenty-first century, made even more valuable by its numerous photographs.

-Rigdrol Jikar (Rig grol རིག་གྲོ།), *Victoria University, Australia*

This account provides unique insights into the social-cultural structures effectively connecting an Amdo Tibetan herding family with its community and religious institutions through detailed descriptions of the family's New Year activities over twenty days. The local Buddhist-centered culture resonates to some extent with my own Namuyi Tibetan New Year in terms of cleaning rituals and other preparations, visiting relatives with certain types of meat, and so on. This raises the question of why these two groups share many similarities, though they are geographically, culturally, and linguistically different? Notably, the author provides examples of how the community's social-cultural configurations are in the process of reformulation as new technology is introduced locally.

-Li Jianfu 李建富 (Libu Lakhi, Zla ba bstan 'dzin ལྷུ་བ་བསྐྱེད་འཛིན།),
Qinghai Normal University 青海师范大学

Detail matters. Culture lives in the rhythms of everyday life and individual practice. Klu thar rgyal's carefully described personal experiences and family relations provide an in-depth account of an Amdo Tibetan New Year, focusing on critical elements such as visiting relatives and community members, gift exchange, hospitality, wedding ceremonies, and religious activities. With discussion of rapid change currently underway in Tibetan New Year activities, Klu thar rgyal's *Hopes, Gatherings, and New Beginnings* is an indispensable resource for those interested in the Tibetan New Year and an excellent contribution to Tibetan Studies.

-Sangs rgyas bkra shis སངས་རྒྱལ་བཀྲ་ཤིས། *University of Colorado Boulder*

Hopes, Gatherings, and New Beginnings: An Amdo Tibetan New Year is a richly detailed and photographically illustrated account of Lo sar 'Tibetan New Year'. Painstaking participant observation and in-depth interviews provide insights into the community's rapid changes, particularly with Lo sar and weddings. Through careful ethnographical analysis, Klu thar rgyal enlightens readers about how smartphones, electricity, and internet access have affected, altered, and weakened Tibetan traditional festivals and rituals. This significant contribution to Tibetan studies provides invaluable insights into this community and its people.

-Duojie Zhaxi (Rdo rje bkra shis ར་རྟོ་ཇེ་མཁའ་ཤིས།) *Qinghai Minzu University*

"Platters of stacked food for treating guests during the Lunar New Year and weddings" is mentioned several times, reminding me of "We have placed a mountain of bread and meat before the maternal uncle and guests and offered a sea of liquor and tea to the guests" heard at Huzhu Mongghul (Tu, Monguor) weddings. This confirms similar ways of entertaining guests in Tibetan and Mongghul communities at weddings and when receiving many guests. Klu thar rgyal offers readers a vivid description of a 2018 Lo sar in his home herding community in today's Guinan County, Hainan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai Province, China. A diary format provides a rich tapestry of memories, tribes, stories about and experiences of the

author's family and community, folk ideas, behaviors, food, clothing, adornments, visits to relatives and community members, purchasing items from shops, house-cleaning, frying and baking bread, making Tibetan cakes, holding religious rites, mountain deity altars, weddings, pilgrimages, horseraces, chats, humor, taboos, customs, singing, eating, and drinking during the six days before Lo sar until the fifteenth day of the New Year of 2018.

"Mother served the guests her best, but after they left, Mother filled the guests' bowls with ashes and did not touch them for several days to avoid disease and evil." Again, this resonates with Mongghul historical practice to avoid disease and evil brought by guests or strangers. This was particularly true for children considered weak and who easily fell ill at a time when high-quality health care was lacking. In contrast, today's Mongghul youth would find such behavior astonishing.

"If we did this, our family would have no conflicts in the coming year. We believed this and tried our best to be nice to each other. Mother would forgive us no matter what bad things we did on these days." Mongghul practice this, particularly on New Year's Eve and the next three days. Family members do their best to preserve harmony and to be kind to each other. Scolding and bickering are avoided for fear misfortune will come to the family.

Dramatic change is accelerating in this herding community as it encounters rapid globalization, modernization, and cultural transformation through WeChat, vehicles, electrical appliances and devices, new clothing trends, modern housing, and new lifeways. The young Tibetan scholar, Klu thar rgyal, has done impressive work in preserving a record of his pastoral community's New Year in 2018 at a time when local young people increasingly leave the pastures for work in urban areas that attract with the dazzling promise of modern lifestyles, gaiety, and splendor, and easy-to-find jobs that regularly pay, creating new social and cultural situations. We eagerly await more of Klu thar rgyal's valuable writings that we and later generations will read, allowing reflection, comparison, and recollection of what grassland culture was in the early twenty-first century.

-Limusishiden, *Qinghai University Affiliated Hospital*

DEDICATION

To my father (Rdo rje རོ་རྒྱལ། b. 1971), mother (Kun thar skyid ཀུན་ཐར་སྐལ་བུ། b. 1972), brother (Dpal rgyal དཔལ་རྒྱལ། b. 1991), and sister (Lha mo mtsho ལྷ་མོ་མཚོ། b. 1996).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank Sgrol kho, Gabriela Samcewicz, and Sarge for their valuable comments and suggestions; my parents and sister for constant encouragement; and my brother for his photographs and artwork.

CONTENTS

ACCLAIM <3>

DEDICATION <10>

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS <11>

CONTENTS <12>

ABBREVIATIONS <17>

INTRODUCTION <18>

- THE SETTING <23>
- MGO MANG CHU COMMUNE <25>
- PRIVATE OWNERSHIP <27>
- A MA LCAM MOUNTAIN LAB TSE <29>
- CONCLUSION <30>

LOCATIONS <33>

- FIG 1: China, Mtsho sngon Province, Mtsho lho (Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mang ra (Guinan) County. <33>
- FIG 2. A lags 'ja' mo's journey to my home. <34>
- FIG 3. A pa¹ lo lon's journey to Zi ling from his home. <35>
- FIG 4. The pilgrimage route from Yangs dus Community to the Jo khang in Khri ka (Guide) by Mother and me on the Tenth Day of the First Lunar Month. <36>
- FIG 5. My family's house and enclosures. <37>

INDEX OF PEOPLE, PLACE NAMES, AND MONASTERIES <40>

- PEOPLE <40>
- PLACE NAMES <45>
- MONASTERIES AND TEMPLES <46>

THE TWENTY-FIFTH DAY OF THE TWELFTH LUNAR MONTH
(10 FEBRUARY 2018) <49>

- FIG 6. Preparing and frying Lo sar bread. <57>
- FIG 7. Dough on a steamer tray before it is fried. <58>
- FIG 8. Lo sar bread. <58>
- FIG 9. *Rgyal bo dmar drus*. <59>
- FIG 10. *Rgyal bo* dough. <59>

¹ LT: a pha.

- FIG 11. Baked *rgyal bo* and other baked offering bread. <60>
- FIG 12. Dumplings that Mother, Brother, and I made for Lo sar guests. <61>
- FIG 13. Dumplings on a steamer tray. <61>

THE TWENTY-SIXTH DAY OF THE TWELFTH LUNAR MONTH
(11 FEBRUARY 2018) <62>

- FIG 14. Scattering straw for sheep. <65>
- FIG 15. Feeding straw to sheep. <65>

THE TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY OF THE TWELFTH LUNAR MONTH (12 FEBRUARY 2018) <66>

- FIG 16. Ma ma came to greet A che and chatted with her in Room 1. <74>
- FIG 17. Elders and the *bla ma*. <74>
- FIG 18. Receiving holy water from the *bla ma*. <75>
- FIG 19. The *bla ma*'s seat. <76>

THE TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY OF THE TWELFTH LUNAR MONTH
(13 FEBRUARY 2018) <77>

- FIG 20. Making dumplings at Ma ma's home. <82>
- FIG 21. Boiling *gro ma*. <83>
- FIG 22. *Thud*. <83>
- FIG 23. Decorated *zhun* in platters. <84>
- FIG 24. *Zhun* pieces. <84>
- FIG 25. A sheep *brang 'go*. <85>
- FIG 26. A sheep *tshang ra*. <85>
- FIG 27. A yak *brang 'go*. <86>

THE TWENTY-NINTH DAY OF THE TWELFTH LUNAR MONTH
(14 FEBRUARY 2018) <87>

- FIG 28. The *bsang khri* behind my family's house. <93>
- FIG 29. Mother sweeps sheep dung pellets into small piles. <94>
- FIG 30. Mother carries sheep dung pellets. <94>
- FIG 31. Livestock dung piles. <95>
- FIG 32. Lo sar food on a table in A pa lo lon's guest room. <95>
- FIG 33. Offerings in A pa lo lon's guest room. <96>
- FIG 34. Hanging prayer flags on a wooden electricity pole. <96>
- FIG 35. New prayer flags and A pa lo lon's old adobe-wood house. <97>

THE THIRTIETH DAY OF THE TWELFTH LUNAR MONTH
(15 FEBRUARY 2018) <98>

- FIG 36. Mother purifies Room 2. <105>
- FIG 37. Brother with green prayer flags. <106>
- FIG 38. Lo sar food on a table in Room 4. <107>
- FIG 39. Brother and his painting of dogs. <108>

THE FIRST DAY OF THE FIRST LUNAR MONTH
(16 FEBRUARY 2018) <109>

- FIG 40. A *rgyal bo* bread with *kha btags*. <118>
- FIG 41. A Lo sar visit to A pa lo lon and Ma ma. <119>
- FIG 42. A Lo sar visit to a neighbor. <120>
- FIG 43. My cousins at daybreak. <120>

THE SECOND DAY OF THE FIRST LUNAR MONTH
(17 FEBRUARY 2018) <121>

- FIG 44. Food for a wedding in Nor bu's guest room. <126>
- FIG 45. Chatting after assisting a family soon to hold a wedding. <126>
- FIG 46. Wedding helpers are served dumplings. <127>

THE THIRD DAY OF THE FIRST LUNAR MONTH
(18 FEBRUARY 2018) <128>

- FIG 47. Rnam rgyal's guest room. <136>
- FIG 48. Platters of stacked food for the bride's escorts in Rnam rgyal's guest room. <136>
- FIG 49. Offering incense at Rnam rgyal's home. <137>
- FIG 50. Men circle the incense altar, chanting and praying. <137>
- FIG 51. Local male guests are served bowls of hot dumplings in soup. <138>
- FIG 52. Local female guests eat dumplings. <139>
- FIG 53. Waiting for the bride and her escorts. <140>
- FIG 54. Greeting the bride's escorts. <141>
- FIG 55. Pouring wedding liquor into a bowl provided by the bride's side. <141>
- FIG 56. Loudly orating to mountain deities and flinging liquor into the sky. <142>
- FIG 57. Local men and women greet the bride's side separately. <142>
- FIG 58. The bride. <143>
- FIG 59. A tantric practitioner chants. <143>

- FIG 60. A wedding starts with jokes. <144>
- FIG 61. Local men listen to the conversation between the bride's side and local elders through open windows. <144>
- FIG 62. A male singer from the bride's side. <145>
- FIG 63. A local female singer with a yellow *kha btags*. <146>
- FIG 64. A local female singer with a red *kha btags*. <146>
- FIG 65. A local woman listens to love songs at the wedding. <147>
- FIG 66. A local woman listens to love songs while recording them on her phone. <147>
- FIG 67. Local females record love songs at a wedding. <148>
- FIG 68. Local men and women listen to love songs separately. <148>

THE FOURTH DAY OF THE FIRST LUNAR MONTH
(19 FEBRUARY 2018) <149>

- FIG 69. Rgya mtsho and his wife, Lcags mo byams.² <153>

THE FIFTH DAY OF THE FIRST LUNAR MONTH
(20 FEBRUARY 2018) <154>

- FIG 70. The bride's side with gifts for each of the groom's escorts. <159>
- FIG 71. The bride's grandfather and another elder in discussion. <159>
- FIGS 72, 73. Two local women. <160>
- FIG 74. A singer performs a contemporary Tibetan song at a wedding party in a restaurant. <161>
- FIG 75. Men and women sit at different tables in the restaurant. <161>

THE SIXTH DAY OF THE FIRST LUNAR MONTH
(21 FEBRUARY 2018) <162>

THE SEVENTH DAY OF THE FIRST LUNAR MONTH
(22 FEBRUARY 2018) <165>

THE EIGHTH DAY OF THE FIRST LUNAR MONTH
(23 FEBRUARY 2018) <168>

THE NINTH DAY OF THE FIRST LUNAR MONTH
(24 FEBRUARY 2018) <170>

- FIG 76. Aunt Stag mo mtsho makes dumplings for visitors. <174>
- FIG 77. Platters of food on a short-legged table in the center of the *hu tse* at Aunt Stag mo mtsho's home. <174>

² See Klu thar rgyal et al. (2020) for more on Lcags mo byams' life.

▪ FIG 78. Uncle Klu skyabs rgyal and his visitors. <175>

THE TENTH DAY OF THE FIRST LUNAR MONTH

(25 FEBRUARY 2018) <176>

▪ FIG 79. Two altars in front of the Yul lha Temple. <181>

THE ELEVENTH DAY OF THE FIRST LUNAR MONTH

(26 FEBRUARY 2018) <182>

THE TWELFTH DAY OF THE FIRST LUNAR MONTH

(27 FEBRUARY 2018) <186>

THE THIRTEENTH DAY OF THE FIRST LUNAR MONTH

(28 FEBRUARY 2018) <191>

▪ FIG 80. A chosen sheep after a ritual in Enclosure 1. <197>

▪ FIG 81. The *gos sku* at Klu tshang Monastery. <198>

▪ FIG 82. Pilgrims crowd near the *gos sku* at Klu tshang Monastery.
<198>

THE FOURTEENTH DAY OF THE FIRST LUNAR MONTH

(1 MARCH 2018) <199>

▪ FIG 83. Racehorses in windy weather. <202>

▪ FIG 84. People gather for horseraces. <202>

THE FIFTEENTH DAY OF THE FIRST LUNAR MONTH

(2 MARCH 2018) <203>

▪ FIG 85. Bshad sgrub conducts a ritual in Room 2. <208>

CONCLUSION <209>

FURTHER READING <211>

TIBETAN REFERENCES <221>

ENGLISH AND CHINESE REFERENCES <223>

TIBETAN TERMS <229>

CHINESE TERMS <237>

INDEX <239>

ABBREVIATIONS

LT = Literary Tibetan

MLBR = Mtsho lho bod rigs rang skyong khul nang bstan mthun
tshogs dang krung go'i bod brgyud nang bstan mtho rim slob
gling nang bstan zhib 'jug khang

OT = Oral Tibetan

TAP = Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture

INTRODUCTION

I provide readers with a photographically illustrated world of community, family, and personal interactions with the Lo sar 'Tibetan New Year' of 2018 at the center. This is a time and place of hopes, gatherings, celebrations, and new beginnings in the A mdo³ Tibetan community of Tsha nag (Chanaihai),⁴ Mgo mang (Guomaying)⁵ Township, in China's northwest Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province. As spectators, academics, and students attentive to Himalayan regions are aware, there is no lack of scholarship in Tibetan Studies, including Lo sar, as "Further Reading" (this book) testifies. However, while other valuable Lo sar studies on Mang ra County (Tsering Bum 2008, Thurston and Tsering Samdrup 2012, Nangchakja 2011, and Tsering Bum et al. 2013) are available, this book is unique in leading us, day by day, autoethnographically through the duration of Lo sar with intimate life, family, and community details.

One of several motivations for writing this text was listening to students from Central Tibet describe how they celebrated Lo sar on trains en route to schools in Inner China or when returning home. This helped me better appreciate the value of my winter holiday. During every Lo sar, I visit thirty to fifty families, participate in three or four

³ A mdo designates the northeastern part of ethnic Tibet and includes communities in Mtsho nub (Haixi) Mongolian and Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Rma lho (Huangnan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho lho (Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mgo log (Guoluo) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho byang (Haibei) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho shar (Haidong) City, and Zi ling (Xining City) in Mtsho sngon; Kan lho (Gannan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture and Wuwei City, Gansu Province; and Rnga ba (Aba) Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture and Dkar mdzes (Ganzi) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan Province.

⁴ Home to the Rnying ba, Dpon tshang, Rdor jag, Thang ta, Nag skor, and Rung chung tribes.

⁵ In 2017, the township population was 13,857, with ninety-eight percent of the herders reported as "settled" (<https://bit.ly/3h76hFU>, accessed 29 July 2020). Other government sources report ninety-four percent of the township population is Tibetan (<https://bit.ly/3oWbtWL>, accessed 29 July 2020).

local weddings, and join religious rites and three- and eighty-year-old birthday celebrations.

My descriptions reflect my family's Lo sar in 2018. I do not suggest that these Tibetan New Year observations represent all Lo sar activities in the vast Tibetosphere, nor all historical periods locally.⁶ My observations include pre-Lo sar preparations, delivering Lo sar bread to families that had experienced a death during the year, Tibetan-cake making, displaying Lo sar food for visitors, preparing and making offerings to mountain deities, Lo sar visits, attending traditional weddings held in my home community and modern weddings held in two restaurants in the local township town, and family activities during the two days of Lo sar that are considered inauspicious. I also describe a pilgrimage with my mother to the Yul lha and Jo khang temples in Khri ka (Guide) County Town, rituals at nearby Klu tshang Monastery, horseraces, and ceremonies conducted by an invited monk at my home, marking the end of Lo sar, and details of a young relative's suicide and its local impact on Lo sar.

I describe the first day of the first lunar month (16 February 2018) below:

Father (Rdo rje) placed the incense, fried bread, and candies on the brick altar behind our house and sprinkled tea on these offerings. Praying and chanting loudly, he did the same at the three other small incense soil altars I had made in front of the brick altar. Just after midnight, as firecrackers rattled-tattled in the distance, Father flung fresh tea in the four directions and poured some on the fire. Meanwhile, Brother (Dpal

⁶ For example, Klu thar rgyal et al. (2020:125-127), based on my maternal grandfather's (Bu lo, aka Lo, b. 1929) phenomenal memory, describes a Lo sar in 1947 by locals who had fled with their livestock and tents to the Bla brang area to evade mistreatment from Ma Bufang's government officials. As Lo sar drew near, tribal members were camped in black yak-hair tents in a circle at the foot of a mountain chain. A few days before Lo sar, the camp divided into upper and lower sections, with women from each section building a big, square wall of frozen yak dung about one meter tall in the center of the camps. A large, adobe stove was made in the center of each square. Merrymaking with feasting, drinking, and love song performances lasted for three days. This is a valuable, detailed description of pre-1950 local Lo sar in an A mdo herding community.

rgyal)⁷ and Sister (Lha mo mtsho) lit firecrackers that exploded with bright sparks as Father and I hollered, "*Lha rgyal lo* 'Victory to the deities!'"

As lights came on in A pa lo lon's [paternal grandfather] house, Father continued flinging tea and loudly praying while circumambulating the altars in a clockwise direction. I blew a *dung dkar* 'conch shell' as I followed him. Brother and Sister were behind us. After three circumambulations and prostrations to the brick altar, we walked to the incense altar in front of my family's house, where my family offers incense daily.

We repeated what we had just done and noticed a fire blazing on A pa lo lon's incense altar. After offering incense, we went inside our home and performed three prostrations to the images of Buddha, *bla ma*, and deities in our shrine room. Next, we moved to the guest room, where Mother served freshly boiled milk tea in new bowls. Each had three jujubes and a small piece of butter. Mother looked young and fresh in a lambskin robe she wore only during Lo sar and at weddings. Her sister had given her this robe a few years earlier.

We all felt special and renewed in our new or seldom-worn robes. We had tea together behind tables with various Lo sar food, spoke to each other politely, and used both hands to respectfully offer and receive things such as bowls of food and Lo sar gifts. Our New Year started at this moment as our house brimmed with colorful clothing and special food. I have this particular emotion only once a year during Lo sar.

Presented as a diary, I share my observations and thoughts drawn from meticulous notetaking and photographs after returning home on the twenty-fifth day of the twelfth lunar month (10 February 2018), six days before Lo sar began (16 February 2018) until Lo sar's conclusion on the fifteenth day (2 March 2018). It was the twenty-fifth time I had spent this critical occasion at home with my family.

Visits to thirty-two local families⁸ who are part of the largest pastoral community - Tsha nag - in Mgo mang Township, Mang ra

⁷ Dpal rgyal (b. 1991) became deaf after he was given streptomycin when he was two-years-old (Klu thar rgyal 2017).

⁸ Tsha nag families refer to their group as *ru skor*, a term that locally designates a group of herding families who may or may not be relatives, live

(Guinan) County,⁹ are detailed. Located at an elevation of 3,100-3,400 meters above sea level, Tsha nag is about ten kilometers from Mgo mang Township Town; sixty-eight kilometers from Mang ra County Town; 206 kilometers from Chab cha (the capital of Mtsho lho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture);¹⁰ and 201 kilometers from Zi ling (Xining) the capital city of Mtsho sngon Province.¹¹ Tsha nag has an all-Tibetan population of 2,162 (530 households), of whom about eighty percent are illiterate or semi-literate, including my parents.¹²

By 2018, I had celebrated Lo sar with my family on the pasture twenty-five times. Brother and I are considered the earliest Lo sar visitors among our neighbors of about twenty-seven households. They have come to expect our early Lo sar visit not long after midnight on Lo sar Eve. They would be disappointed if we visited after daybreak on

together in a particular area, and share a strong sense of community.

⁹ In late 2016, Mang ra County's population consisted of 60,199 (74.58%) Tibetans, 15,481 Han (19.18%), 3,551 Hui (4.4%), 984 Monguor (Tu, 1.22%), 330 Mongolians (0.41%), and other ethnic groups (0.2%) (<https://bit.ly/2Wv29rK>, accessed 25 July 2020).

¹⁰ The 2011 population was 437,800, including 269,100 Tibetans (62.9% of the total prefecture population) (<https://bit.ly/2OAGwll>, accessed 25 July 2020).

¹¹ Mtsho sngon's 2010 population was 5,626,722 including 2,643,206 Han (53%), 1.38 million Tibetans (24%), 834,200 Hui (15%), 204,400 Monguor (Tu; 3.63%), 107,000 Salar (1.9%), Mongolians 99,800 (1.77%), and other ethnic minorities 22,500 (0.40%) (<https://bit.ly/3eIW6pw>, accessed 25 July 2020). In 2010, the total Tibetan population in China was 6.3 million, mainly distributed in the Tibet Autonomous Region and the provinces of Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan, and Yunnan (<https://bit.ly/2CQ1o5e>, accessed 30 July 2020). Consequently, Mtsho sngon's Tibetan population is about twenty-two percent of China's total Tibetan population.

¹² Father's knowledge of Tibetan allows him to read WeChat news, scriptures, and novels and send phone text messages in the local dialect (not Literary Tibetan). His knowledge of Chinese is limited to writing his name in Chinese characters and speaking enough of the Mtsho sngon Chinese dialect to purchase items in the township town. In 2018, Mother began learning to read Tibetan from WeChat groups taught by a monk and a local Tibetan language teacher. She does not send typed messages nor regularly listen to Tibetan language TV programs because she does not understand the more literary Tibetan that broadcasters employ. However, she enjoys programs that use colloquial A mdo Tibetan that feature folksongs and programs related to human health.

the first day of Lo sar, which partially explains why we continue to visit early.

When I was a child, waiting for Lo sar seemed an eternity. I often asked my parents how many more days remained until Lo sar. When that day came, I put on my best clothes and visited other families who gave Lo sar gifts, including candies, apples, small packs of cookies, tins or bottles of fruit-flavored beverages, and firecrackers. A few days before Lo sar, everyone stayed at home. When my parents ran out of conversation after dinner, they would suddenly tell my siblings and me to put on our new clothes. We would rush to the wardrobe, open it, and take out our new folded clothes wrapped in plastic. We sniffed the fresh odor of our new clothes, bringing more pleasure. Once dressed, we would parade back and forth in front of our parents, who reclined on the *hu tse* 'warm adobe bed', happy that we seemed to have matured and looked less like children. Father preferred buying oversized robes for Brother and me for Lo sar, hoping we would grow more quickly.

In about 1998, when Brother was old enough to take care of me, Father instructed us to pay Lo sar visits to distant neighbors just after midnight on Lo sar Eve. As Lo sar approached, Father drew a map showing each neighbor's home and had us memorize it to ensure we would not get lost at night. We never missed a household that Father wanted us to visit. I did not sleep on Lo sar Eve when I was a child, despite inclement weather and the long distances between neighbors and my family house. Each household lives on its own fenced pasture. Homes are two to five kilometers apart. For Brother and me, visiting two-thirds of nearby families took about eight hours on foot. We started at around one in the morning and returned home at around nine AM. Father visited other nearby families by motorcycle. Once Brother was old enough to ride a motorcycle, it took us about three hours to visit all the neighboring families. After 2014 it was about the same using a car, but there was more protection from the harsh weather.

Locals often hold weddings and celebrations for three year-old-children and eighty-year-old elders during the Lo sar period. My parents never miss any of the celebrations to which they are invited.

Father highly values family and tribal connections, and when several weddings are held on one day, my family sends members to each wedding. Neighbors and relatives help the involved family. When there is a wedding for neighbors or relatives, at least Father and Brother assist from our family.

THE SETTING

For part of the year, I live in Rdo ser, a sub-area of Tsha nag Community, with my parents, older brother, and younger sister. In 2021, my paternal grandfather lived with his granddaughter (Dga' skyid lha mo, b. 2005) in a forty-three square meter apartment provided by the government¹³ in Mgo mang Township Town while she attended Mang ra Number Two Nationalities Middle School. When school was not in session, they returned to A pa lo lon's home, located about 200 meters from where my parents now live year-round.

In the pre-1958 period, ¹⁴ Tsha nag was a *sde ba* ¹⁵ 'community'¹⁶ led by Dpal ldan (d. 1958), the last Tsha nag *dpon po* 'lord'. Though not the wealthiest local family, four or five servants worked for him. About half of Tsha nag Community locals owned livestock. The other half were poor, had few if any livestock, did not move seasonally because of their lack of livestock, and hoped for work, such as herding and softening sheepskin, with wealthier families. With few such opportunities, their living conditions were very harsh. For example, their primary food was roasted barley flour mixed with water. Some poor households supported themselves by cultivating barley on small fields or stealing livestock from outside their home community.

¹³ A pa lo lon had a government-provided *dibao* 'basic living allowance'. Consequently, the apartment was rent-free, although he was required to pay about 2,000 RMB for winter heating.

¹⁴ For material on a Tibetan community in the same county and its history, including the Mongol presence and social chaos in 1958, see Nyangchakja (2016:63-87).

¹⁵ Literary Tibetan: *sde pa*.

¹⁶ In 2020, locals continued to use the term *sde ba*.

Those who owned many livestock camped and moved between seasonal camps. In the pre-1958 period, Mchod rten Monastery¹⁷ was located in the Ra dmar 'Red Goat' area known as Mchod rten nyin 'Stupa Sunny Side'. Wealthy families stored some of their property at the monastery, except during winter, when they lived near the monastery in Ra dmar, Skam lung 'Dry Ravine', Rtsis nag 'Black Divination', Chos gru 'Religious Corner', and Rdo ra'i gzhung 'Stone Wall Valley'.

The spring pastures where wealthier families herded were Mkhan pa'i nyin 'Wormwood Artemesia Sunny Side', Rgan lung 'Old Ravine', and Khra tshang 'Sparrow Hawk Nest'.

When summer arrived, households spent a day moving to pastures at higher elevations: Bya stod khugs 'Upper Bird Mountain Plain', Gram pa 'Stream Banks', Na nag ldang 'Dark Black Wetland', Glag tshang che ba 'Big Eagle Nest', Glag tshang chung ba 'Small Eagle Nest', Nags 'dabs 'Forest Border', Ru phyor 'Attractive Camp', and Ha ra wil 'Black Mountain'.^{18,19}

In autumn, we moved to Tshi wong gong kha.²⁰ After 1958,

¹⁷ Mchod rten Monastery (Tsha nag pad dkar chos gling) was located in Ra dmar Valley, Tsha nag Community, Mgo mang Township. It was founded by Dge bshes don grub with the help of fifteen *smgyung gnas pa* 'fasting people' in 1930. There were about fifty monks before 1958. It moved to Rtsis nag Valley in the same community after the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) MLBR (1999:596-597).

¹⁸ Father explained that this area was once occupied by Mongolians and, after their departure, the name remained, which locals cannot explain. Juha Janhunnen suggests: "Mongolian is *kara-uula > hara-uul. However, if it entered Tibetan as *hara-(w)ul, the vowel *u would have undergone the regular reduction process in A mdo Tibetan yielding [hara-wəl] that could be written <ha ra lbil>, since <i> is also pronounced [ə]." See Janhunnen (2011) for more on Mongolian toponyms in Mang ra County.

¹⁹ In about 2001, Tsha nag had conflict with another community over borderland in the summer pasture. After negotiations, Tsha nag received Rdo la 'Rocky Slope' and Ra khyā ring 'Bright Long Horn' pasture areas.

²⁰ Rdo rje suggests "Tshi wong" may be from *tsha* 'salt' *wong* 'multiple'/'pile' e.g., *thal wong* 'ash pile'. Juha Janhunnen comments, "[tsʰæ'gəŋ] might be an adaption of Mongolian [tsʰa'gəŋ] 'white', assuming that the salty earth is white. There is a Mongolian term for salty earth - kujir > [hɔɖzər] - a different item." Father also suggests *gong kha* refers to a long, flat area.

community members did not camp there, and in 2020, it was no longer a part of Tsha nag Community.

Great Aunt Lcags mo byams (b. 1940) recounted how, as a child, when it was time to move seasonally, her father and a few other men went to the next campsite and marked sites where families pitched their tents the next day in a circle with livestock in the center at night to avoid theft from bandits. Later, there was no argument when individual tent sites were assigned.

Locals herded wherever they liked but dared not move as a single family to distant areas for fear of being robbed by outsiders. Instead, they often moved and camped with close relatives. Banditry was a local fact of life:

The Thang ta and Rdor jag tribes were famous for their raids and often camped together. At that time, men were bandits ... to bolster their reputation, prove their bravery, receive more recognition from their home community, and share resources with their own camp. Every man in these two tribes went on bandit raids (Klu thar rgyal et al. 2020:78).

Rdo ser 'Yellow Stones', Ko ra 'Leather Wall', Chu rnga thang 'Stream's End Land', Ba shi thang 'Dead Cattle Land', Khus gdong 'Saddle-Like Mountain', and Rgya dur rgyab 'Behind Chinese Tombs' were considered border areas, where herds of *dgo ba* 'gazelle' and *gna' ba* 'blue sheep' were often seen. However, in the 1960s, they were designated as part of the contemporary Tsha nag Community.

MGO MANG CHU²¹ COMMUNE

Established in the autumn of 1958, Mgo mang chu Commune was located in the center of the current Mgo mang Township Town location. The government confiscated all property, although smaller and poor-quality tents were given to certain families. Generally, several families shared a tent near the Tsha nag tent cafeteria. Able-bodied men were taken away or assigned work on road construction, mainly leaving

²¹ *Chu* from the Chinese *qu* 'region'.

women, children, and a few elders. In Tsha nag Community, one sizeable black yak-hair tent was set up as a cafeteria (ten to fifteen kilometers from the commune center), the only official food source for all Tsha nag residents. Tsha nag Dadui 'Big Brigade' was established shortly after that. Tsha nag Community members were divided into five sub-brigades²² and assigned work with members of the same sub-brigade.

Locals assigned to herd livestock received food rations from the local cafeteria, for example, a half-kilo per person of barley flour once a month. Herders generally had better food compared to those assigned to agricultural labor. For example, women who herded and milked yaks could secretly steal milk, while male sheepherders got meat by lying to leaders that sheep had died from disease or wolves had killed them.

Twice a day, steamed bread buns or a soup made from boiling water and wheat flour were allocated to those who lived near the Tsha nag tent cafeteria. Great Aunt was assigned herding duty in the mountains for a herd of commune yaks. She milked and made yogurt, butter, and cheese and was required to hand over a certain amount of these products, calculated on daily and monthly quotas, to commune officials who inspected her work. She could keep dairy products above the quotas, but if she provided less, she was punished.

In late 1962, Lo (my maternal grandfather, b. 1929) applied for and was allocated 500 sheep. Generally, four of one hundred sheep were considered likely to die. Consequently, twenty sheep would belong to him if there were still 500 sheep after one year. However, more than twenty sheep died one year, and he was fined 300 RMB. Lo continued herding sheep, and in about 1970, the numbers were such that at the end of the year, he was awarded 1,000 RMB, some of which

²² The sub-brigades were Number One, Number Two, Number Three, Number Four, and Number Five. In 2020, locals continued to share a strong sense of tribal affiliation. For example, when locals introduced themselves to other Tibetans, they gave their tribal affiliation rather than their sub-brigade name and, without exception, they participate in funerals held for tribal members, instead of on the basis of official sub-brigade families. Nevertheless, official meetings were held on the basis of sub-brigade.

he used to buy butter and cheese for his family from the local commune shop.

In 1976, he used the remaining money for a pilgrimage to Lha sa with a man from another community. They walked to Khri ka County Town, got on a truck to Zi ling, and took another truck to Na gor mo (Ge'ermu), where they met a Tibetan truck driver who preferred butter rather than cash in payment for transport to Lha sa.

From 1958 to the late 1970s, several flocks of commune sheep were herded in Rdo ser, an area Lo described in the pre-1950s as a place where thick, tall grass made walking difficult. Herds of gazelle frequented the area and were liable to gore sheep. This, plus the difficulty of accessing water - herders had to spend a day taking their livestock about twenty kilometers to and from a water source - meant very few families camped here. Gazelles were soon only a memory, and in about 1965, water was piped from a local stream that, from 1983 to 2009, was shared by some twenty families.²³

Attempts involving adults and children were made a few years after the commune was established to cultivate selected grassland areas.

PRIVATE OWNERSHIP

There was no private ownership of livestock from 1958 to 1983. A few commune sheepherders, such as Lo were assigned sheep and could increase their number by taking good care of them, ensuring that few died each year. In 1983, each person was assigned twenty sheep, three yaks, and one horse per family. At that time, my paternal grandparents' family had eleven people and received 220 sheep, thirty-three yaks, and one horse.

Not long after livestock distribution, local grassland (excluding the summer pasture) was divided among the sub-brigades, with each

²³ In 2009, several additional water sources became available with two or three families sharing a single water source. For more on the project that brought water to local communities (including photos), see <https://bit.ly/2Z88PNs> (accessed 7 September 2020).

sub-brigade ordered to build soil walls for their pasture. This undertaking continued for several years. All local families at that time lived in adobe houses. However, some families had to leave their houses and herd livestock with families from the same sub-brigade. Some lived in adobe-wall structures that featured yak-hair cloth roofs during this time, while some lived in tents in winter. Though livestock had adequate forage, living in an adobe house in winter was considered ideal. Furthermore, most livestock were weak and unable to move across long distances in spring. Those with work assignments necessitating not living in adobe houses in winter complained.

Around 1991, some local Rdo ser families well-connected to local government officials began buying fencing from Zi ling and enclosing grassland near their houses, including A pa lo lon, who fenced 2,500 *mu*.²⁴ Some other families followed this example. However, families with no grassland near their houses herded in sub-brigade pastures. Arguments over land ownership resulted in land reassignment in 1995. Each male family head was then required to swear that the number of family members and family-owned livestock reported to village and township town leaders was true. For example, my father swore, "*Pha ma gnyis kyi sha* 'flesh of parents'"²⁵ that he had five family members, 160 sheep, fifteen yaks, two cattle, and one horse.

When my father was a child, his duty was to herd sheep, while his younger siblings were tasked with herding yaks. He was free to herd anywhere on the Tsha nag Community grassland, but he had to stay with the sheep all day because it was hard to separate them if flocks mingled.

In 1995, local authorities assigned my family 1,300 *mu*²⁶ of winter and autumn pastures based on the number of family members and the family's livestock. The family fenced the land in the same year, separating the pastures into two adjacent areas. The fenced area where

²⁴ 167 hectares/412 acres.

²⁵ Implying that he would eat his parents' flesh if what he reported was untrue.

²⁶ Eighty-seven hectares/214 acres.

the family's house is currently located was the winter pasture when I was a child. The other pasture was for autumn and spring.

In 2020, a twenty-*mu* field in the fenced pasture nearest my family's house was used to grow *yug go*²⁷ 'oats'. Consequently, livestock were kept in the other pasture from the mid-fifth to the mid-ninth lunar months. In autumn, a combine cut the plants without removing the grain, leaving the plants on the ground to dry. After drying, the oats were baled and transported near the sheep enclosure, covered with plastic, and fed to sheep in winter.²⁸

In 2020, individual family fencing translated into much less effort in sheep-herding. However, locals quickly point out their fenced pastures are deteriorating, especially after the summer pasture was made off-limits. "Our winter pasture would be much better if it could rest," is commonly heard, suggesting that herding livestock on the summer pasture provides fenced pasture a chance to recover from intensive grazing. Locals comment that grass grows less densely, and there is more damage to the pasture from sheep hooves than in the past.

A MA LCAM MOUNTAIN LAB TSE

In the pre-1958 period, locals renewed the A ma lcām Mountain Lab tse on the fifteenth day of the fifth lunar month. Each family collected thirteen *glang ma* 'willow' branches from the same mountain and tied them together the day before they renewed the *lab tse*. On the actual day of *lab tse* renewal, willow branches were inserted in the *lab tse*, and threads made at home from white sheep wool were wrapped around its center. Finally, incense made of coarsely-ground roasted barley mixed with juniper bits was burned on the altar near the *lab tse*. At the same time, people prayed to A ma lcām Deity and other deities such as Yul lha for safety and good health for people and livestock.

In 2020, the *lab tse* was jointly renewed by Tsha nag and Bab

²⁷ *Yug go* is the local dialect term. LT, *yug po*.

²⁸ In 2019, thirty RMB was paid per *mu* to the combine operator and three RMB per bale to the baler.

rus communities, with each family contributing one hundred RMB. A ma clam Mountain is a border between these two communities, which have a long history of cooperatively renewing the same *lab tse*.

Bla ma 'Tsham pa of Rme rgan Monastery²⁹ directed the rebuilding and stayed in a tent with several other monks on top of the mountain. Local Tibetan workers were paid to help build the new *lab tse* while community members voluntarily transported water, sand, red bricks, metal poles, and three-meter-long wood pieces resembling arrows on their backs up to the mountaintop from the foot of the mountain. After completion, both communities offered incense, and men who had brought horses led them around the *lab tse* and incense altar three times while calling on A ma lcam and Yul lha to help their horses win local horseraces. Men also hung new prayer flags purchased in the local township town on wooden poles around the incense altar.

CONCLUSION

I camped on the grassland with close relatives for much of my childhood. This afforded me experiences, insights, and social skills that, coupled with an interest in local history (Klu thar rgyal 2020), relevant language skills, and curiosity, have empowered me to observe and describe local Tibetans enmeshed in rapid change. Locals are guided by aspirations to be "modern"; access unprecedented opportunities to travel, communicate, and participate in formal education; are eager to display accessories of "success" and "modernity" such as vehicles, expensive electrical and electronic appliances and devices, hairstyles, new clothing trends, more modern housing, and other trappings of stylishness on social media that are viewed, discussed, and emulated.

This text is a collection of ongoing narratives of rapid multi-dimensional transitions, the whats, and whens of which remain unpredictable. It describes how locals negotiate the religious and secular; the allure of the accoutrements of nationally-prescribed

²⁹ Rme rgan grwa tshang (Mugansi) Monastery is located in the southwest of Hexi Township, Khri ka County (Nian and Bai 1993:306).

upward social mobility and its ultimatums within a mesh of traditional thoughts and life options; the struggles between the individual and family, clan, and tribal affinities; and generationally-determined interactions via social media versus in-person visits. This text is thus valuable testimony to a particular time (~2018) in an evanescent era in which the past was recalled through personal memories, complex community interactions, and elders' recollections and interpretations.

The future of traditional Lo sar observations is problematic. There is a growing trend to use this time to visit Lha sa, hot spring resorts in Khri ka County, Buddhist attractions such as Rgya nag ri bo rtse lnga (Wutaishan, Shanxi Province) and Sanya (Hainan Province), and such foreign destinations as Thailand. Images posted on social media further encourage these ambitions, disrupting traditional practices.

Finally, in terms of fruitful future research possibilities, this text suggests a multitude of possibilities. For example, local toponyms merit further study in recognition of how "senses of place also partake of cultures, of shared bodies of 'local knowledge' ... with which persons and whole communities render their places meaningful and endow them with social importance" (Basso 1996:xiv) and how, in "the Tibetan context, the landscape is infused with meaning that is at once religious and secular, and place names can evoke a similarly large array of referential meanings" (Thurston 2012:62). Such research is particularly urgent in Tsha nag as the store and significance of local toponym knowledge steadily diminish with the passing of aged culture bearers and the local pastures where they once herded are now off-limits or severely restricted.

Another critical area of study is how women and girls experience Lo sar. How does their experience differ from what men and boys experience? Why? What do women and girls think about these differences? Ideally, women would keep careful accounts of Lo sar and daily life and write about it. For example:

Like other girls in our home community, Sister often didn't go anywhere for Lo sar, but she made up and put on the new robe that our parents had bought her for Lo sar and took selfies. Her phone signal was stable

because she had a better-quality phone. She stayed [at home] ... and appeared on her live broadcast for the video app MeiPai 'Beauty Shot'.³⁰

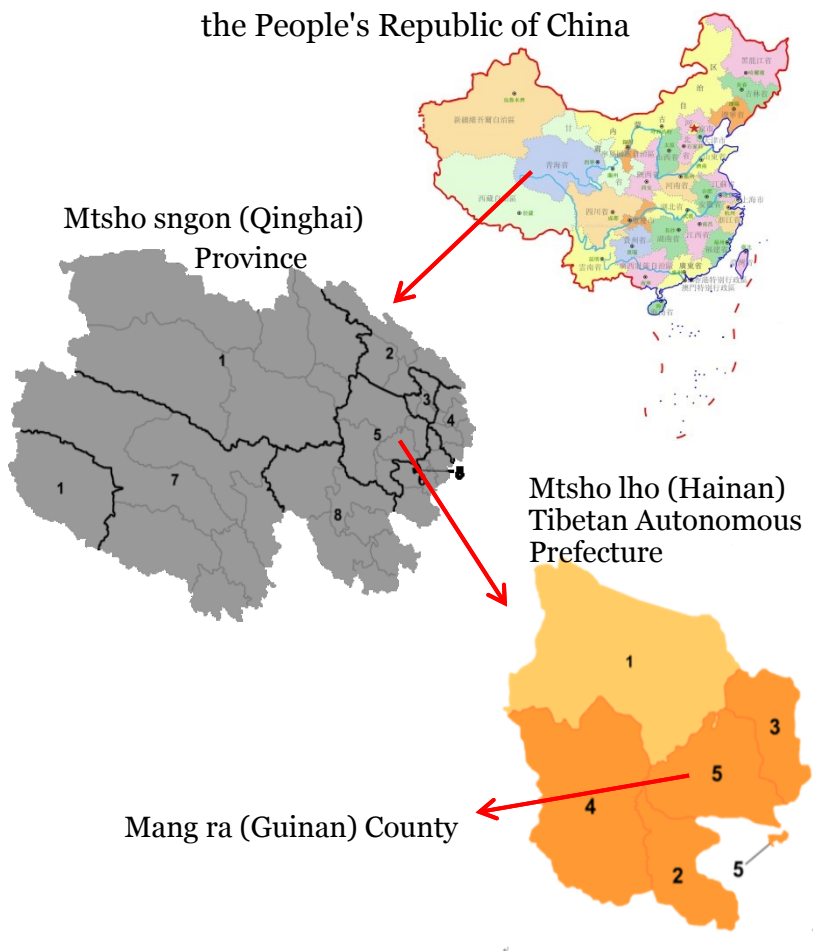
Why does Sister often not "go anywhere" during Lo sar? What is the attraction of MeiPai? How do Sister's Lo sar experiences and reactions differ from women of a generation older? Studies, particularly by women trained and encouraged in local studies and ethnographic writing, would allow readers to understand better the role of gender in rural Tibetan areas and how girls and women negotiate between rapidly changing conventions and membership in an increasingly virtual global village.

³⁰ The Google apps store (<https://bit.ly/3hM3Vog>, accessed 29 August 2020) gives the description below. However, in 2020, MeiPei was popular with both local men and women.

Meipai is a safe & friendly video community for women to share their lives. This is a gathering place for girlfriends, a place you can chat about secrets and personal matters close to your heart. It's a great place to chat with other girls, find solutions to your problems, listen to each other, and share in each other's interests. Everything you want to say, everything you want to learn, everything you want to see is right here.

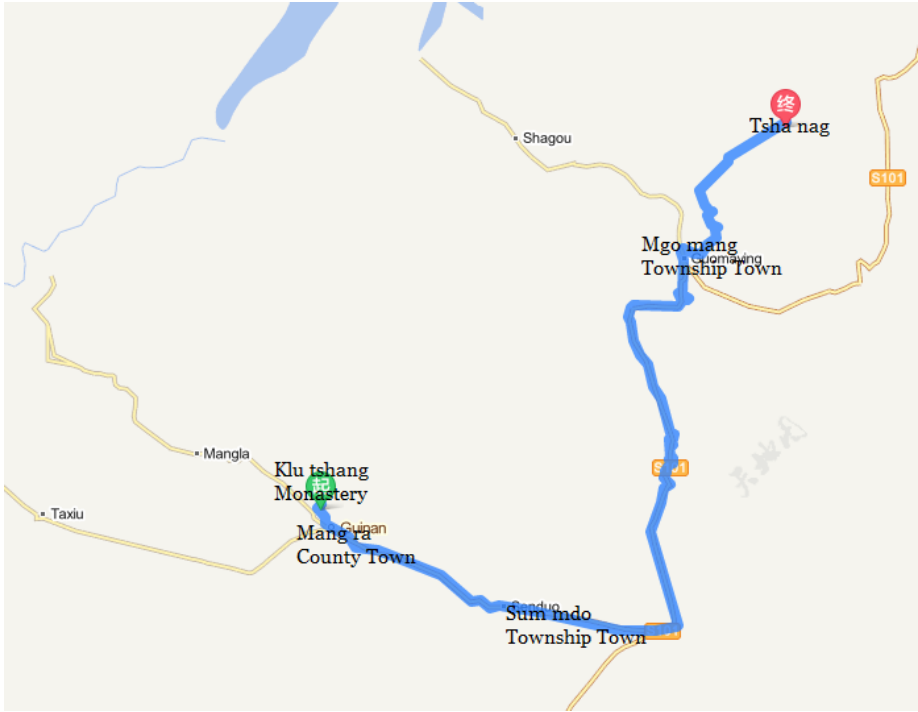
LOCATIONS

FIG 1. China, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province, Mtsho lho (Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mang ra (Guinan) County.³¹



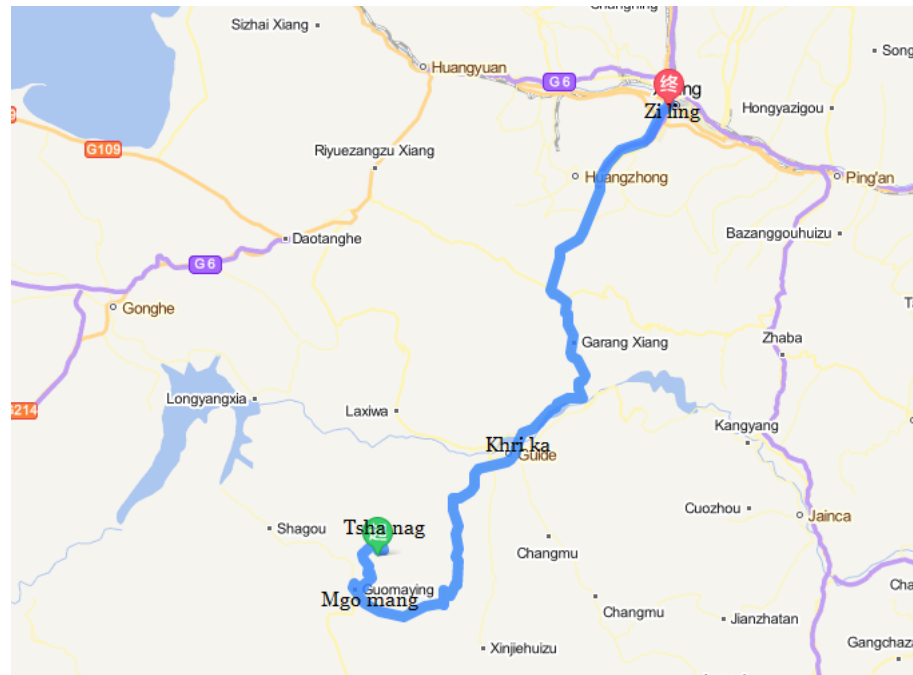
³¹ A revised version of images from <https://binged.it/>: (top) 3aAyhzc, (center) 2LLAMBX, and (bottom) 2sSeuHp (accessed 23 January 2020).

FIG 2. A lags 'ja' mo's journey from Klu tshang Monastery to my family's house was about 117 kilometers.³² On the twenty-seventh day, A lags 'ja' mo and three other monks came by car to my family's home from Klu tshang Monastery to hold the *'Pho lung* (explained later) ritual.



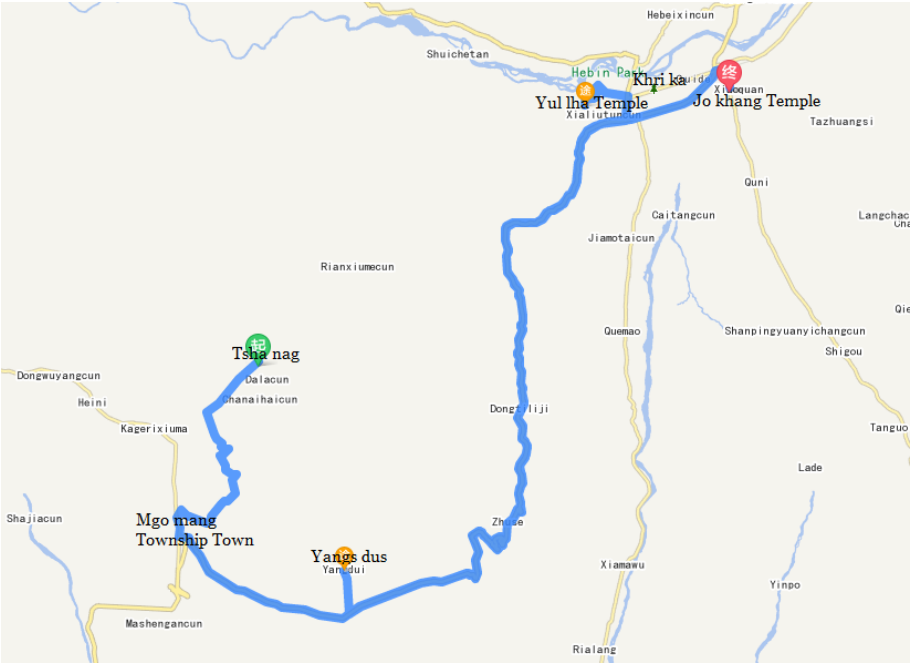
³² A revised version of <https://bit.ly/2rVUK8A>, (accessed 26 July 2019).

FIG 3. A pa lo lon's journey to visit his son-in-law (Klu skyabs rgyal) from Tsha nag Community to Zi ling on the third day of the first lunar month (a distance of about 201 kilometers).³³ At Mgo mang Township Town, A pa lo lon traveled by car to Zi ling, where Klu skyabs rgyal was in the Number Two Provincial Hospital.



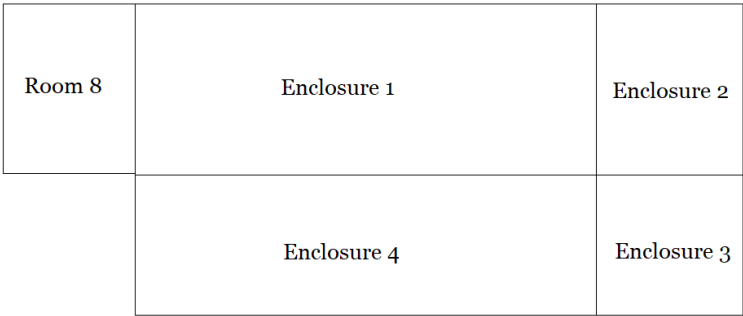
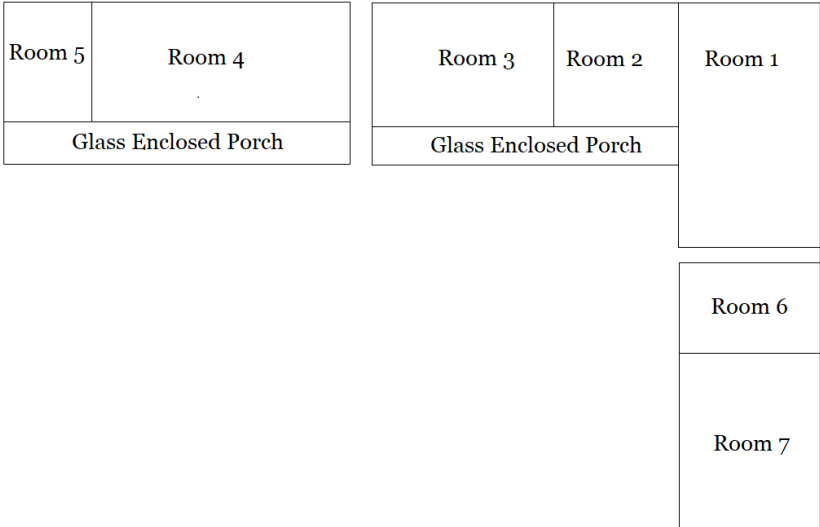
³³ A revised version of <https://bit.ly/2rVUK8A>, (accessed 26 July 2019).

FIG 4. Mother and I went on a pilgrimage with locals from Yangs dus Community on the tenth day of the first lunar month.³⁴ We started from Yangs dus Community, visited the Yul lha Temple in Khri ka, and reached our final destination - the Jo khang Temple in Khri ka.



³⁴ A revised version of <https://bit.ly/2rVUK8A>, (accessed 26 July 2019).

FIG 5. My family's house - rooms and enclosures.



Room 1. The *ja dbang* (LT: *ja khang*) is the room where family members sleep, cook, and eat. My parents often sleep on a *hu tse*, heated by smoldering livestock dung. The *hu tse* is large enough to sleep four adults comfortably.³⁵ My family and visitors might also sit here. Mother often cooks three meals daily for us on a large black metal stove in the center of the room and prepares food for our family's watchdog.

Room 2. In this, the *mchod khang* 'shrine room', *Bka' 'gyur*,³⁶ *Yum dum pa bcu gnyis*,³⁷ *'Phags pa brgyad stong ba* 'Astasahasrika Prajna Paramita',³⁸ and *Sangs rgyas sman bla* 'the Medicine Buddha' are kept on a large shelf that Brother and I made in 2014. Images of Buddha, the tenth PaN chen bla ma (1938-1989), Emperor Srong btsan sgam po, some locally famous *bla ma*, and modern Tibetan scholars such as Dge 'dun chos 'phel (1905-1951), hang on the walls. Invited monks hold rituals in this room. Mother often chants, prays, offers a lamp and seven copper bowls with water, and does seven prostrations in this room every morning. In the afternoon, she chants in this room for one or two hours.

Room 3. Known as the *'grul khang rnying ba* 'old guest room', this was my family's guest room and where we spent our Lo sar until 2014. That year, my family built rooms 4 and 5 next to rooms 1, 2, and 3. The *'grul khang rnying ba* now has a wooden bed where Brother sleeps, a sofa, a TV on a stand, and a refrigerator where Mother keeps meat and yogurt.

Room 4. The *'grul khang gsar ba* 'new guest room' is where we serve guests during Lo sar. Special guests are also invited into this room in daily life. This red brick building (rooms 4 and 5) was built

³⁵ The *hu tse* is about 2.5 meters wide and four meters long.

³⁶ A sacred collection of Tibetan Buddhist literature representing the "Word of the Buddha" that contains more than 1,000 works. Most were originally in Sanskrit, translated after the eighth century, and compiled in the thirteenth century (<https://bit.ly/2SSffFC>, accessed 29 July 2019).

³⁷ Also known as *Shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa stong phrag brgyad pa*, it consists of twelve volumes that Father bought in Zi ling in 2008. One of his local friends had suggested that these twelve volumes would bring good health and fortune to our family.

³⁸ The best-known Buddhist work from 100 BCE to 100 CE. See more at <https://bit.ly/2NJKQ2w>, (accessed 1 September 2019).

and decorated by Brother with help from my family and relatives. The total cost was about 120,000 RMB, including labor costs. Half of the funds were from the government in 2014.

Room 5. This room has no name. My parents often arrange for guests from far away to sleep here. I read, and Brother paints in this room.

Room 6. This blue room is made of color-coated steel panels. We store things here, including my family's folded, black yak-hair tent. Mother also keeps meat in a big basin here in winter because it is cold and stays frozen.

Room 7. This blue room is also made of color-coated steel panels. In winter, Father keeps his car and the three-wheeler³⁹ here at night.

Room 8. This small room was built next to Enclosure 1 in 1999. It is made of lightweight concrete blocks and is where my family fries Lo sar bread on an adobe stove attached to the *hu tse*.

Enclosure 1. Sheep are kept here in winter. Only half of the roof is a permanent cover, so Father and Brother cover the other half with plastic or straw mats in winter.

Enclosures 2 and 3. Baled forage and weak ewes and their lambs are kept here. Mother also keeps cows in Enclosure 2 in winter because Enclosure 2 has only half a roof.

Enclosure 4. Sheep are kept here, except in winter. This enclosure has no roof.

³⁹ See a photo of this three-wheeler at <https://bit.ly/2Ycyx44m>, (accessed 1 September 2019).

INDEX OF PEOPLE, PLACE NAMES, AND MONASTERIES

PEOPLE

Name	Description	Tribe
A lags 'ja' mo (b. 1975)	Also known as 'Ja' mo, an incarnation <i>bla ma</i> from Klu tshang Monastery. 'Ja' mo's father and A pa lo lon's mother's father were siblings.	
A pa lo (b. 1929)	my maternal grandfather	Rdor jag
A pa lo lon (b. 1947)	my paternal grandfather	Thang ta
A che (b. 1931)	The oldest woman among my neighbors. The area where we live in Tsha nag Community is called Rdo ser. About twenty-seven families lived in Rdo ser and shared a tap-water source until 2009. These families refer to each other as <i>ru skor</i> . "Neighbors," as used in this text, refers to these families.	Thang ta
A dga' (b. 1969)	my oldest paternal uncle	Thang ta
A sgang (b. 1941)	her husband was A pa lo lon's only paternal uncle	Thang ta
A kho (b. 1993)	my nickname	Thang ta
Bde b+he (b. 1969)	A sgang's daughter-in-law lives near A sgang and enjoys hosting guests	Thang ta
Bsod nams tshe ring (1969-2018)	my mother's sister's husband, who passed away from gastric cancer	Rnying ba
Btsan mgon thar (b. 1985)	my youngest paternal uncle, the father of Zla ba sgrol ma	Thang ta

Btsun mo yag (b. 1992)	wife of my youngest paternal uncle, Btsan mgon thar	
Btsun thar (b. 1976)	my parents' friend from an agricultural area who lived with my family for one year	
Btsun thar skyid (b. 1977)	my mother's niece who lives with her husband in Yangs dus Community	
Bshad sgrub (b. 1969)	a monk from Smar khams Monastery, who my family invites to our home when rituals are required	
Bu lo/Lo/A pa lo (1929-2021)	my maternal grandfather, whom I addressed as "A pa lo"	
Chos mtsho skyid (b. 1978)	my paternal aunt	Thang ta
Deng Xiaoping (1904-1997)	China's paramount leader from 1978 until his retirement in 1989	
Dga' skyid lha mo (b. 2005)	my cousin, Phyug mo skyid's daughter	Thang ta
Dkon mchog rgya mtsho (b. 1976)	A sgang's son and my father's friend; a monk in childhood and adolescence and later a layman; the wealthiest person in Tsha nag Community	Thang ta
Dpal rgyal (b. 1990)	my brother	Thang ta

the eleventh Mkhar sngon po (Rje btsun 'jigs med shes rab rgya mtsho) (1943-2016)	A <i>bla ma</i> who was born in Chos tsha Community. He stayed in Mkhar sngon bo bkra shis Yun brtan Monastery in Hohhot, the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region for most of his life.	
Glang sgron skyid (b. 1997)	the oldest daughter of A dga'; my cousin	Thang ta
Gnam lha mkhar (b. 1976)	my youngest maternal uncle who lives with A pa lo	Rdor jag
Gnam lha thar (b. 1974)	A sgang's youngest son; my father's close friend	Thang ta
Gnam mtsho (b. 1982)	Father's sister. My paternal grandparents adopted her after her mother died. Gnam mtsho moved into her husband's home in Khri ka after marriage.	Thang ta
Hu Jintao (b. 1942)	China's paramount leader from 2002 to 2012	
Jiang Zemin (b. 1926)	General Secretary of the Communist Party of China (1989-2002)	
Jo le (b. 1974)	Mother's friend, an unmarried woman in her late forties, lived with her parents and her son	
Klu kho	my nickname	Thang ta
Klu skyabs rgyal (1967-2020)	the husband of my paternal aunt, Stag mo mtsho	Rnying ba
Klu thar rgyal (b. 1993)	author of this book	Thang ta

Kun thar skyid ⁴⁰ (b. 1972)	my mother	Thang ta
Lcags byams rgyal (b. 1975?)	Btsun thar skyid's husband	
Lcags mo byams (b. 1940)	my maternal great aunt	Thang ta
Lha mo (b. 1969)	A sgang's only daughter who became blind	Thang ta
Lha mo mtsho (b. 1995)	my younger sister	Thang ta
Li thar rgyal (b. 1994)	my cousin; Stag mo mtsho's oldest son	Rnying ba
Laoban Rgya mtsho	Dkon mchog rgya mtsho's nickname	Thang ta
Ma ma (1944-2018)	my paternal grandmother	Thang ta
Mao Zedong (1893-1976)	Chairman Mao was a Chinese communist revolutionary and the founding father of the People's Republic of China	
Mkhas btsun (~1955- ~2005)	my family's neighbor and a tantric practitioner whom locals invited to their home to chant	
Nor bu (b. 1984)	His house was about two and a half kilometers from my family's house. He held a wedding for his daughter on the third day of the first lunar month in 2018.	Thang ta

⁴⁰ For a thirty-seven minute film about her life, see <https://bit.ly/3oThH5z>, (accessed 27 May 2021).

Pad+ma yag (b. 1967)	Nor bu's older brother and his closest neighbor	Thang ta
Phyug mo skyid (b. 1983?)	my youngest paternal aunt; the mother of Dga' skyid lha mo	Thang ta
Rdo rje (b. 1971)	my father	Thang ta
Rgya mtsho (b. 1930)	my maternal great aunt, Lcags mo byams' husband	Thang ta
Rnam rgyal (b. 1975)	Father's friend from Blo rgya, a neighboring community. Blo rgya held a wedding for his son that Brother and I attended.	
Sgrol ma mtsho (1944-2018)	my paternal grandmother, whom I addressed as "Ma ma"	
Stag mo mtsho (b. 1973)	my paternal aunt	Thang ta
Tshe ring rdo rje (b. 1975)	a wealthy man in Tsha nag Community who sings traditional songs	Thang ta
Xi Jinping (b. 1953)	China's paramount leader beginning in 2012	
Yul lha thar (b. 1947)	my paternal grandfather, whom I addressed as "A pa lo lon"	Thang ta
Zla ba sgrol ma (b. 2005)	my cousin, the daughter of Btsan mgon thar and his second wife	Thang ta

PLACE NAMES

Name	Location (2018)
Bal bo	a mountain located east of Mgo mang
Blo rgya	a neighboring herding community
Chos tsha (Qiecha)	a community in Mgo mang Township
Khri ka	Khri ka County Town, Mtsho lho Prefecture
Lha sa (Lasa)	the capital of the Tibet Autonomous Region
Mang ra	Mang ra County Town
Mgo log	Mgo log (Guoluo) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon Province
Mgo mang	Mgo mang Township Town
Mtsho lho	Mtsho lho Prefecture
Mtsho sngon	Mtsho sngon Province
Ra dmar	a ravine in Tsha nag Community, Mgo mang Township
Rdo ser	a small area in Tsha nag Community
Rta ra (Dala)	a community near Tsha nag Community
Smar kham (Mashengan)	a community near Tsha nag Community
Stong che (Dangche)	a broad valley in Khri ka County
Stong skor (Dongke)	a community in Mgo mang Township
Tsha nag	the community where Klu thar rgyal grew up, located in Mgo mang Township
Yangs dus	a community near Tsha nag Community
Zi ling	the capital of Mtshon sngon Province

MONASTERIES AND TEMPLES

D+hiH tsha	Also known as D+hiH tsha bkra shis chos sdins, located fifty-four kilometers northwest of Bayan Township Town, Dpa' lung (Hualong) Hui Autonomous County. Separated into an upper and a lower monastery, the former is called the "new monastery" and was founded by the fourth Zhwa dmar dge 'dun bstan 'dzin rgya mtsho in 1903. The lower monastery is known as the old monastery and was established by the Nang so 'lord' of Lde tsha at the beginning of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). Both are Dge lugs monasteries. ⁴¹
Jo khang	The Jo jo lha khang, near Khri ka County Town center, was founded by Sa paN kun dga' rgyal mtshan in 1244. ⁴²
Klu tshang	Rnye dgon bshad sgrub dar rgyas gling and Klu tshang dgon bshad sgrub dar rgyas dge 'phel gling are alternative names. Also known as Klu tshang bshad sgrub dge 'phel gling, it sits at the foot of Hamairi Mountain at an elevation of 3,080 meters. ⁴³ This Dge lugs monastery is located in Sum mdo (Senduo) Township, Mang ra County, two kilometers from the county town. The Fourth Rnye, ⁴⁴ Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma (1850-1909), founded this monastery in 1889 at the request of four Bdud shul klu ba tribes. ⁴⁵

⁴¹ Nian and Bai (1993:53-55).

⁴² Nian and Bai (1993:185). See Smith (2017:65) for a photo.

⁴³ Nian and Bai (1993:195).

⁴⁴ A religious title.

⁴⁵ MLBR (1999).

Lha dkar bo Temple Founded by Bstan 'dzin rgya mtsho, the head of Rong bo Monastery, at the end of the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) and the beginning of the Ming Dynasty,⁴⁶ it is located on the south bank of the Yellow River, eleven kilometers from Khri ka County Town center.

Smar khams Also known as Smar khams mtshams khang, it is situated in Smar khams Community, twelve kilometers northeast of Mgo mang Township Town center and 41.5 kilometers from Mang ra County Town. The elevation of this monastery is 3,000 meters. The incarnation *bla ma*, Blo bzang bstan 'dzin rgya mtsho (Huaqing Huadan Longmuhan, 1899-1958), founded this monastery in 1949. He was from the Halang⁴⁷ Tribe in Reb gong (Tongren) County.⁴⁸

Rab gsal and Sbyin pa were monks who built meditation rooms in Bya stod ske chu gar dkar ya khul, where they meditated for many years. These particular rooms were later known as the Smra khams mtshams khang 'Smra khams meditation rooms'. In 1948, Rje ngag dbang blo bzang bstan 'dzin rgya mtsho dpal bzang po taught here. Afterward, it was called Tshogs gnyis 'phel rgyas gling. The monastery follows both the Dge lugs and Rnying ma sects.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Nian and Bai (1993:188). See Smith (2017:65) for a photo of the monastery.

⁴⁷ Possibly: Sha rang (LT: Sha sbrang).

⁴⁸ Nian and Bai (1993:197).

⁴⁹ Dam chos rgya mtsho (2002:79-80).

Sku 'bum	Located on Lianhua Mountain, north of Lushaer Township, Huangzhong County, twenty-six kilometers from the center of Zi ling, ⁵⁰ it is the birthplace of Tsong kha pa blo bzang grags pa (1357-1419), who founded the Dge lugs Sect. It is also considered one of the six largest Dge lugs monasteries. ⁵¹
Yul lha Temple	the Yul lha Temple is in the west of Khri ka County, six kilometers from the Khri ka County Town center

⁵⁰ In 2019, it was administratively part of Zi ling City.

⁵¹ Nian and Bai (1993:39).

THE TWENTY-FIFTH DAY OF THE TWELFTH LUNAR MONTH (10
FEBRUARY 2018)

It was six AM. I heard my parents talking while I was on the *hu tse*. I did not know when they had gotten up. I groggily gazed at the wooden ceiling. My parents had worried I would catch a cold on the other bed. So, wrapped in a quilt Mother brought, I slept on their warm adobe bed my first night after coming home from Xi'an City to reduce their anxiety.

My parents chat in the morning while having tea near the warm stove after breakfast. My parents typically go to bed at around nine PM. Father is tired from his daily township town visit and activities, and Mother is exhausted from many home chores and caring for our livestock.

Mother rolled up her sleeves and started mixing dough in a large stainless-steel container on an old red wooden table that reached her waist. I asked in confusion, "Mother, didn't we already make Lo sar bread?"⁵²

"I'm making *rgyal bo* 'king'⁵³ bread because today is the twenty-fifth day of the twelfth lunar month," she said.

I realized this was the day Mother makes *rgyal bo* every year. She explained this day was considered auspicious and that her mother had made *rgyal bo* on this day, a tradition that she follows. Women compliment Mother's *rgyal bo* when Brother and I take it on Lo sar visits. It is too small to easily break in our robe pouches as we go about our Lo sar visits. The *rgyal bo* made by other women were larger, and some accidentally broke when local men carried them in their robe pouches. Broken *rgyal bo* were embarrassing. Most women carefully

⁵² Lo sar bread refers to two types of fried bread made for Lo sar. One has a rectangular shape (see FIGS 7 and 8), another is square and the size of a man's thumb. My family often used fifty kilograms of wheat flour every year in making Lo sar bread.

⁵³ *Rgyal bo* is a term that locals use for this baked bread, which is of two types - *rgyal bo tshes ru* 'king crescent moon', which locals often use as a Lo sar gift, and *rgyal bo rna bzhi* 'king with four ears', which is offered to local deities. Alternative terms include *lo sar rgyal bo* 'New Year King'. In this text, I use *rgyal bo*.

examine the *rgyal bo* we bring and praise it. Mother's *rgyal bo* doesn't turn dark from baking and has a very attractive brown color. I was glad to go on Lo sar visits with a gift of Mother's *rgyal bo* to each family, which the family would return. They would add cash and/or drinks or snacks as gifts, which I will describe later.

Until 2014, locals didn't present *rgyal bo* bread with *kha btags*⁵⁴ as gifts during Lo sar visits. Instead, we each took a bottle of liquor in its hardcover box. When we left, the visited family returned our bottle of liquor with gifts such as apples, candies, a bottle of fruit-flavored beverage, or firecrackers, but not cash. In about 2014, local Tibetan leaders and families agreed that *rgyal bo* bread with *kha btags* were appropriate gifts during Lo sar visits, a return to the tradition our elders had practiced many years earlier. Locals also agreed to give cash in return, which was considered a better choice than junk food. Guidelines for cash gifts were one to five RMB for child visitors, five RMB for youths and adults, and ten RMB for elders.

I will illustrate Lo sar visits in 2017 that Brother and I made together. Families ensure their watchdogs are securely chained on Lo sar Eve and during the entire fifteen days of the Lo sar period. Any unchained watchdog is old, toothless, or tame and doesn't bite people.

When Brother and I reached one of the twenty-seven neighbor families we eventually visited, their courtyard gates were wide open in anticipation of visitors. Once the family's watchdog had alerted the family, or they had heard our motorcycle or car, a family member rushed out and urged, "Please come in!" Others said, "We were just talking about you and your brother. We were expecting your arrival!"

I immediately smiled and said, "*Lo sar bzang!* 'Happy Lo sar!'"

"*Di khyod kyi lo sar yin*, 'This is a Lo sar gift for you!'" I said, presenting my *rgyal bo* bread and *kha btags* as Brother and I entered their guestrooms.

"This is my brother's Lo sar gift for you!" I explained when Brother was presenting his *rgyal bo* bread and *kha btags*.

"What lovely *rgyal bo* bread!" some women complimented upon seeing the *rgyal bo* bread. If Brother presented *rgyal bo* bread and *kha btags* to the host family's father, I would give mine to the host

⁵⁴ Tibetan ceremonial scarf.

family's mother. We presented our *rgyal bo* bread and *kha btags* to adult family members, not children. At times, Brother and I gave our *rgyal bo* bread and *kha btags* to the same person if there was only one family member at home.

Once we were invited to sit at a table with Lo sar food the family had prepared, Brother and I wiggled out of our right robe sleeve, or both robe sleeves. If the latter, we loosely tied them around our waist before sitting. We were soon served hot black tea with a bit of butter in it or milk tea with three jujubes floating on top. A host family member handed us a bowl of tea with both hands, and we received it with both hands. Next, cigarettes were offered. I don't smoke, so I politely refused. Brother does smoke, so he accepted a cigarette, which a male host family member would light.

Once we were seated, someone brought a plate of hot steamed stuffed dumplings to each of us, which the family had already prepared and kept warm on the stove in the room. Some families insisted that we eat and might even have picked up a dumpling, handed it to us, and urged us to eat. Most of the time, we returned dumplings to the plates with, "Thanks! I'll eat them later."

Some host families did not serve dumplings. Instead, they came where we sat, picked up a piece of cooked meat with a sharp knife, and handed it to us to eat. We returned the meat and knife to the meat platter with, "No thanks."

Brother and I were then asked if we drank liquor. We didn't, so they brought a big bottle of fruit-flavored beverage, poured some into two cups, and said, "It's OK if you don't drink liquor, but you should drink beverages for Lo sar," which we did drink. However, we often refused to drink such beverages because of the frigid weather. Most families encouraged us to munch on sunflower seeds while chatting.

As I mentioned earlier, Brother is deaf and does not speak, so I conversed with the family, mostly focusing on Lo sar topics, such as the weather. We commented on how auspicious this Lo sar would be if it was snowy. Comments were also made about the family's earliest Lo sar guests, if the host family or my family had slept on Lo sar Eve, who was drinking liquor among Lo sar visitors, if my father had gone on Lo sar visits, my current life, and so on. After about fifteen minutes, or

when Brother had finished smoking his cigarette, I signaled our departure: "We must leave! We have more families to visit!" before Brother and I stood and wriggled back into our long robe sleeves.

The family understood and didn't urge us to stay longer. One or two family members would bring the *rgyal bo* bread and *kha btags* we had brought with an added five RMB bill for each of us and say, "This is for you!"

If it was before dawn, a family member held a flashlight and escorted us to their courtyard gate where we had parked our motorcycle or car and said, as we were about to leave, "Drive carefully! Revisit us when you have time and tell your parents the same!"

Once a member of my family visited a family for Lo sar, my family expected that family to pay a Lo sar visit to my home. The visits and exchange of Lo sar gifts enhance a sense of community, especially since we only visit some families during the Lo sar period.

This morning as Mother was making *rgyal bo* bread, she said she would make *rgyal bo* for each person in my family and an extra one for my future wife. She frequently hints that I should marry soon like other young men in our community who are my age. She made the same hint last year while making *rgyal bo*, so I felt less embarrassed this time. Father sat near the stove, sipping a bowl of milk tea, and joked, "Our family looks like an elder care home since none of our children are married!"

Mother and I laughed, but I realized Father also was suggesting I marry soon. It was the first time he had made this suggestion since my elder relatives had gathered at my home in 2005 when I was a primary school student and discussed my marriage.

Besides *rgyal bo*, Mother also bakes small ball-shaped bread for our *chos skyong srung ma*⁵⁵ 'protective deities' and Yul lha Deity. During Lo sar, Mother keeps this bread in Room 3 with three pieces of fried bread resembling animals⁵⁶ and *rgyal bo dmar drus*,⁵⁷ and

⁵⁵ Dam can and Dpal ldan lha mo are protective (female) deities of the Dge lugs Sect.

⁵⁶ A sheep, a goat, and an antler-less doe.

⁵⁷ A term Mother used for this particular bread that is fried in rapeseed oil. It has the same shape as *rgyal bo*, which is baked in ashes in a thick aluminum pot. *Rgyal bo dmar drus* is smaller than *rgyal bo*.

offers them when my family offers incense at home or burns it on mountaintops, or worships at the Yul lha Temple.

While sitting near the stove, eating *rtsam pa*⁵⁸ for breakfast, Mother told me to add sheep dung to the stove to keep the house warm. She then brought empty plastic bags into which she put fried bread and added some candy.⁵⁹ I asked, "How many families should we send fried bread to?"

Father replied, "Four families in our community this year."

He was planning to give the bags to families who had experienced the death of a family member this year. These families would not celebrate Lo sar or make fried Lo sar bread, which was one reason we gave them some.

"I can take the bread to each family," I offered.

"I'll do it. You need to stay home and help your mother and grandparents today. Your brother will tend the sheep. Fox might attack the lambs at any time these days. You also don't know the exact location of some of these families, so I should go," Father explained, putting on his robe and preparing to leave.

In 2012, my paternal grandparents had lived and celebrated Lo sar in their small apartment, which the local government had provided in the township town. Five years later, the local government built a new red brick house near my family's house for my paternal grandparents in their winter pasture. A pa lo lon and Ma ma had moved to the new house with their granddaughter, Dga' skyid lha mo, to celebrate Lo sar about twenty days earlier.

My paternal grandparents had five sons, four daughters, and an adopted daughter. Most of them had remarried two or three times except for my father, Oldest Aunt, and Gnam mtsho, who did not divorce. A pa lo lon had arranged all the marriages and had distributed property. Afterward, my paternal grandparents lived with Youngest Uncle, Btsan mgon thar, and his current wife, Btsun mo yag, in Ba shi thang in our home community, about eight kilometers from my

⁵⁸ Roasted barley flour mixed with dry cheese, butter, and milk tea.

⁵⁹ This refers to candy wrapped in colorful plastic. My parents buy candy from the township town. A pack of wrapped candies was considered an excellent Lo sar gift when I was a child.

family's house.

In about 2012, Dga' skyid lha mo and Zla ba sgrol ma attended primary school in the township town, where my paternal grandparents rented a house and cared for their grandchildren. In 2016, they moved into a small flat the government provided. They gave half of the family property to Youngest Uncle and his family at this time. Afterward, A pa lo lon, Ma ma, and Dga' skyid lha mo became a new family and remained in the township town until they moved into their new red brick house in the winter pasture for Lo sar of 2018.

I observed Room 1 while I was eating breakfast. It featured a dusty wooden ceiling blackened by years of smoke. My paternal grandparents built the house in about 1990 for my parents after they had been married for one year. Father was eighteen, and Mother was seventeen when they moved in. Annually, on the nineteenth day of the twelfth lunar month, my family thoroughly cleans our house, a process we call *dud pa gtags*. I had missed it this time, and the ceiling didn't look very clean, so I said, "Mother, didn't you say that our family had already cleaned the house?"

"Yes, on the nineteenth day, as usual," Mother replied.

"Shall Brother and I do it again? It isn't very clean," I said.

"It's OK. There's no time. I spent a whole day cleaning inside the house, including the ceiling."

"You did everything by yourself?"

"Your brother had to tend the sheep, so I did the cleaning."

I knew Father wouldn't help with house chores. I imagined how she had cleaned everything by herself. Every nineteenth day of the twelfth lunar month, all my family, except Father, moved the chairs, sofas, desks, TV, cooking utensils, quilts, carpets, and bedding outside. Big, immovable items such as cabinets and wardrobes were covered with pieces of plastic. The furniture, stoves, ceilings, walls, floor, and every corner of the house were swept and scrubbed carefully using homemade brooms made of tall, dry grass and wet towels. It requires at least three family members to clean the house thoroughly and put everything back inside. I vowed to myself that I would come home early next year to help Mother prepare for Lo sar. She was aging and not as strong as before. It is also dangerous when Mother uses a ladder to

clean the ceiling.

Mother told me we needed to wash all the bowls from the cabinet in Room 1, which was also a tough job. Every year, when Lo sar approaches, we clean all the bowls. Mother and Sister usually wash them, but Sister couldn't come home early this year.

A red cabinet, attached to the right wall of Room 1, features simple pictures of a *dung dkar* 'white conch shell', a *kh rung kh rung* 'crane bird', and a *dpal be'u* 'auspicious knot' that Father painted when I was a child. Hundreds of bowls sit in perfect arrangement in the cabinet. Father buys bowls whenever Mother asks. She says the house feels empty if there are too few bowls in the cabinet and worries guests will say something negative. It's the same in every local home. Whenever you visit a home, their cabinets are full of bowls and containers, signifying that their life is good.

After I greeted A pa lo lon and Ma ma, I started washing bowls in the warm water Mother had prepared. There was thick, black dust in many of the bowls, most of which we hadn't touched since we had washed them last year. As I was cleaning the bowls, Mother entered Room 1 with a bucket of milk she had just milked from my family's two cows. She soon left to drive the cows to another fenced pasture near our house.

Father unpacks straw bales every morning and scatters the straw near the sheep enclosure. He does this one thing before he goes anywhere in winter. That's the only family home chore he does. He spent the usual 10,000 RMB this year to buy straw bales for our 200 sheep, two female cows and their two calves, and a three-year-old female cow to ensure they would survive blizzards. Forage also makes ewes and lambs stronger in the harsh, cold winter. Local merchants offer a good price every autumn for my family's eight-month-old sheep. My parents enjoy hearing locals praise our healthy lambs.

Father left in his small car, a Xiali N3,⁶⁰ with bags of fried Lo sar bread as Mother busily collected cow and sheep dung. I continued washing bowls while watching the A mdo Tibetan TV channel. Brother appeared in Room 1 at around ten AM, just after getting up and

⁶⁰ "The Xiali N3 was a basic family car for China, based on the original Xiali" (<https://bit.ly/2TlP4kd>, accessed 25 February 2019).

washing his face. He went to tend the sheep after eating breakfast and watching TV for a while.

By afternoon, we had all finished our duties. Brother was at home, and the sheep were grazing near our house. Mother finally sat down, sipped a cup of tea, and planned to make dumplings with Brother and me in Room 1. She soon brought a container of chopped mutton from Room 3 to Room 1, put a piece of plastic on the *hu tse*, and placed my family's biggest wooden cutting board on top of the plastic. Mother, Brother, and I began making dumplings while sitting around the cutting board on the *hu tse*.

Mother commented that she and Brother had made dumplings the night before. It seemed Mother would make more dumplings than during the last Lo sar. I asked why and learned that my family had invited a *bla ma* to my home for a pre-Lo sar visit. He would arrive a few days later. Mother wanted to make dumplings for the many guests expected to visit on the day of the *bla ma*'s visit. Mother steamed a batch of dumplings in an electric pot, removed them after they were cooked, and cooled them on a platter. After cooking the dumplings we had made, Mother took them to Room 3 to freeze, which saved preparation time when guests visited during the *bla ma*'s visit and during the Lo sar period.

FIG 6. Mother (left) fries dough. Tshe thar sgrol ma (center, a neighbor) rolls dough into thin strips. Btsun mo yag (right, the wife of my youngest paternal uncle) prepares dough for frying. It took about six hours to finish making Lo sar bread (Room 8, the fifteenth day of the twelfth lunar month, 10 February 2018, Dpal rgyal).



FIG 7. The dough is placed on a steamer tray, which serves as a plate, before it is taken to the pot to be fried (Room 8, the fifteenth day of the twelfth lunar month, 10 February 2018, Dpal rgyal).



FIG 8. Lo sar fried bread (Room 8, the fifteenth day of the twelfth lunar month, 10 February 2018, Dpal rgyal).



FIG 9. *Rgyal bo dmar drus* is the last bread fried (Room 8, the fifteenth day of the twelfth lunar month, 10 February 2018, Dpal rgyal).



FIG 10. Mother made *rgyal bo* dough to bake.



FIG 11. The *rgyal bo rna bzhi* 'king with four ears' (center left) would have been burned as an offering on the incense altar on Bal bo Mountain. However, the *lab tse* had burned, so no offerings were made. Instead, Mother and I offered this bread to Yul lha Deity on the tenth day of Lo sar. The *rgyal bo* (right) was put in a plastic bag with white *kha btags* and given to the families Brother and I visited. When we left their home, the bread and *kha btags* were returned along with gifts such as cash, food, fruit, drinks, firecrackers, and cigarettes.

Eight '*ba' tho* 'round baked bread' were prepared. Mother said that her mother made this particular bread according to the number of family members and later burned the bread with incense as an offering on the *bsang khri* 'incense altar' on the thirteenth day of Lo sar. This year, Mother made eight '*ba' tho* bread because there are five people in my family and three in A pa lo lon's home.



FIG 12. Mother, Brother, and I made these dumplings for guests who might visit on the day of the *bla ma*'s visit.



FIG 13. Mother places dumplings on a steamer tray. After cooking, she cooled them on a platter and took them to Room 3 to freeze, which saved preparation time when guests visited during the *bla ma*'s visit and during the Lo sar period.



THE TWENTY-SIXTH DAY OF THE TWELFTH LUNAR MONTH (11
FEBRUARY 2018)

Father frequently went to the window of Room 3, where he had hung his phone. It was the best place to receive a phone signal in our house. He checked his phone for messages from A lags 'ja' mo.

My family and grandparents were eager to learn the exact time of 'Ja' mo's arrival. A pa lo lon and Father had decided to invite him for Lo sar. It had been years since they had last asked A lags 'ja' mo, whose busy schedule and the long distance between the monastery and my home made visiting seem improbable. However, after A pa lo lon and Father had insisted on inviting him the previous month, he promised to visit our homes before Lo sar. A pa lo lon and Father visited A lags 'ja' mo in Klu tshang Monastery whenever Ma ma fell seriously ill to ask him what they should do next. Ma ma often improved after medical treatment in the local township town hospital, visiting 'Ja' mo, chanting, and inviting monks to hold rituals at her home.

Every year when Lo sar approached, Ma ma fell ill, which worried all our family members and relatives. Once when Sister asked why, Father explained, "When Lo sar is coming, everyone is one year older. It's hard for weak elders to hold on for another year."

I thought this was reasonable because Ma ma had fallen ill the previous month. She hadn't recognized anyone, including A pa lo lon, but she recovered two days later. The same thing had happened near Lo sar the previous year. Many distant relatives and locals came to visit after hearing the news, some of whom I had never met.

A month earlier, after Ma ma's bout with illness, A pa lo lon and Father decided to invite 'Ja' mo to chant '*Pho lung* - a scripture for elders approaching death. Listening to this chant from a monk or *bla ma* ensures the person suffers less when they die.

A pa lo lon and A lags 'ja' mo are relatives, but only my grandparents seem sure about the exact connection.

A pa lo lon's mother was from the Klu tshang area and passed away in 1949 when A pa lo lon was only about two years old. Through distant relatives, A pa lo lon succeeded in finding other relatives he had lost during the social chaos in 1958. 'Ja' mo's father and A pa lo lon's

mother's father were siblings. Because of A pa lo lon's frequent visits to A lags 'ja' mo at Klu tshang Monastery in the last couple of years, he is familiar with Father and me.

"Why does the *bla ma* come before Lo sar when everyone is busy preparing for Lo sar?" I puzzled.

Father said, "A pa lo lon and I invited him during Lo sar, but he will go elsewhere at that time and won't have time to come here, so he decided to visit before Lo sar."

There were several reasons to invite the *bla ma* during the Lo sar period. It was the beginning of the New Year and considered a wonderful time. A visit from a *bla ma* means good fortune comes to family members and livestock in the coming year. Secondly, it is a time of family reunion. My sister and I would both be at home. Thirdly, there is less work, so everyone has leisure time.

Father returned from giving straw to the livestock and picked up his phone from the window to see if the *bla ma*'s assistant had updated the arrival time. There was no message, so Father left a WeChat⁶¹ voice message: "I left a voice message yesterday afternoon, but didn't see any news from you. I don't know if it is my phone's problem that the voice message failed to send."

After about thirty minutes, Father got a WeChat voice message from the assistant: "Sorry for the delay. I was busy. A lags 'ja' mo is still unsure when exactly he will visit your family, but it will be tomorrow or the day after."

Father called the neighbors and relatives whose families had elders, shared this latest news, and told them to be ready and keep the phone signal stable.

I felt this was not a clear answer because Father said the assistant had said the same thing a few days earlier.

Father was planning to give 2,000 RMB to the *bla ma* - 1,000 RMB for the chanting he would perform and 1,000 RMB as a gift for visiting my home for the first time. Mother didn't say anything, seemingly agreeing with Father.

After a short discussion with Mother, Father went to the

⁶¹ WeChat or Weixin is a multi-purpose messaging, social media, and mobile payment app developed by Tencent.

township town to buy a box of apples for the *bla ma* as an additional gift and some tea bricks for the elder relatives he had invited.

When I asked Father why we needed to spend so much on this ritual, he explained that providing elders with such a rare chance was a great honor. He added that Ma ma was often ill, and there would be no regrets if we invited the *bla ma* while everyone was alive. I thought it was reasonable, but 2,000 RMB is not a small amount for my ordinary family. However, there is often no rationale for belief. Those who genuinely believe just want to make offerings and feel good after doing it.

"Today is sunny, so why don't you and Brother clean our glass-enclosed porch? Our guests won't feel comfortable if we don't clean the glass! I'll go herd our sheep this morning!" Mother said while I was having breakfast.

She brought two buckets of water from a concrete tank next to our house and began heating water in a big pot on the stove to use in cleaning. After I finished breakfast, I prepared dog food. Our watchdog has its pot, which I placed on the stove after putting some water inside and adding a bowl of wheat flour and leftovers from our last meal the day before. I stirred it with a wooden stick until it boiled.

Mother urged us to clean the windows as soon as possible in case the weather turned windy later in the afternoon and left to herd the sheep. However, we couldn't start cleaning the windows until eleven AM because of the freezing weather. Cleaning windows was challenging. You had to be careful in freezing weather, or the glass would break. Maybe we lacked skill, but it took hours before we finished. We had to ensure there were no dirty spots. Nevertheless, Brother and I were happy to complete the work before the weather turned windy.

FIG 14. Father transported two straw bales from Enclosure 3 in a cart and then scattered the straw in a row on the ground about ten meters from Enclosure 3.



FIG 15. At ten AM in winter, my family drives the sheep from Enclosure 1 to where straw is scattered. The sheep slowly walk to the pasture after eating straw.



THE TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY OF THE TWELFTH LUNAR MONTH
(12 FEBRUARY 2018)

Father got up around five AM, went to the window, checked his WeChat account, and found a message from the *bla ma*'s assistant: "We will probably come to your home today, but we are unsure of the exact time."

Father was pleased that we could be sure they would arrive today. Mother got up immediately, went to Room 4, and made a fire in the stove to ensure the room would be warm for the *bla ma* and other guests. I got up and helped Mother clean Room 4 and other rooms with a broom. There was dust in every room. It had seeped through gaps in the windows and doors blown by the wind that had persisted strongly since the previous afternoon. Each room had about a half kilo of dust. Sometimes, Mother cleaned more than five times a day when the wind howled in winter.

At around eight AM, A pa lo lon arrived and told Father to call the *bla ma*'s assistant and inquire about the precise time of arrival. Father was reluctant, worrying that this would annoy the *bla ma*. Finally, A pa lo lon picked up Father's phone, stood near my family's window, phoned the assistant, and said loudly, "Please tell us the exact time of your arrival in the township town. Due to our poor phone signal, my second son, Rdo rje, will wait for you on the main road and escort you here. This way, we won't worry about missing your arrival."

The assistant replied that they would reach the township town around eleven-thirty AM and added that they would inform us when they left their monastery.

My parents sent me to my paternal grandparents' home to help A pa lo lon prepare food on a table in their guest room. The *bla ma* would visit and purify the rooms. Initially, the plan was to invite the *bla ma* to my paternal grandparents' home for the ritual. Still, eventually, A pa lo lon and Father decided to hold the rite in my family's Room 4 because it was larger and better able to accommodate the *bla ma* and other guests.

"Today is going to be a great sunny day!" I commented to A pa lo lon as we walked to his home after noticing not a single cloud in the blue sky.

A pa lo lon replied, "It is because of holy A lags 'ja' mo's power."

A pa lo lon offered incense more than five times a day when I was a child and offered incense as soon as we reached his home. Ma ma sat on a chair near the stove in their living room. When she noticed my arrival, she stood and warmly asked me to have tea and bread. I thanked her and said that I had already eaten breakfast. A pa lo lon and my cousin, Dga' skyid lha mo, had made a fire in their guest room's stove, but the room was still frigid.

In the guest room, A pa lo lon opened a paper box full of apples, which I placed in a new metal basin after cleaning each apple. A pa lo lon wanted food stacked up in the basins, so I did exactly what he wished. I also stacked fried Lo sar bread with an attractive gold color in another new plastic basin. A pa lo lon proudly confided that his daughters and daughters-in-law had come and made it a few days earlier. After about ninety minutes, I finished stacking the food in three different basins, including a basin of meat. There was also a small plate of candies and a big bowl of white sugar.

Meanwhile, Dga' skyid lha mo cleaned inside and outside the room with a broom. Her hands and cheeks were red from the harsh, cold weather. A pa lo lon brought a new blanket and unfolded it on a couch next to the table where we had placed food. He put a piece of blue silk above the blanket, designating it as the *bla ma's* seat. Next, he brought another new blanket and covered the bed next to the couch and table for the assistant.

A pa lo lon's guest room was still freezing. I checked the fire in the stove and found smoldering lumps of coal that hadn't caught fire. Cousin and I worked on the fire. Before returning home, I told A pa lo lon that I would help him clean the table in his guest room after the *bla ma* departed in the afternoon. This would entail putting the apples and Lo sar fried bread back in the storage boxes to prevent the bread from drying and the apples from freezing. He said he would like to keep the food on the table since it was only a couple of days before Lo sar.

I returned home after assisting A pa lo lon and found Mother

chatting with an old woman, A che, while boiling a pot of yak meat in our living room. Father had brought A che and her granddaughter from their home, about four kilometers away. My parents often invited local elders to my home when I was a child. A che and her husband came often, chatted, and spent the night at my home. Mother once told me that A che's husband was a great Thang ta tribesman and that he had been invited to the celebration of my three-year-old birthday party on a night of heavy snow. He had come on horseback, cut my hair, called my name, and wished me good fortune.

My family hadn't invited A che since phone service, TV, and electricity had come to my home community about a decade earlier. Before 2011, locals assumed it was impossible to have electricity for each house in the pastures. However, one day in 2010, local community leaders announced most families would have electricity by 2011, warming everyone's heart. Like some other local men, Father rushed to the local town and bought a secondhand TV, a DVD player, a washing machine, and a new freezer.

Our life dramatically changed. There was less visiting and chatting after dinner. After driving livestock back home in the afternoon, people were eager to watch a Chinese TV series about the conflict between China and Japan that had been dubbed in the A mdo Tibetan dialect.

A che was the oldest of our neighbors. Father didn't invite two other very old elders, because the old man couldn't hear clearly, and his wife was bedridden. Their daughter, Jo le, had been their caretaker for ten years. Jo le is in her forties, has a son, and has never married. She is also Mother's close friend. Though only two kilometers separated our houses, Mother had visited Jo le's family only once because she was so occupied with chores in our home. Mother said Jo le's work was more demanding than anyone she knew because she tended their livestock, did home chores, and cared for the elderly couple, including massaging them and keeping them clean. Mother added that Jo le's house was clean and tidy, especially the bed where Jo le's mother lay. Mother and Jo le met when watering their livestock and later kept in touch by phone.

I went to help Father and Brother in Room 4 after greeting A

che. I was glad Father and Brother had placed a wooden tray of apples on a table. Stacking apples on a tray or in a basin is difficult. Apples must be stacked in layers, which is considered attractive and has to be done very carefully; otherwise, the apples will roll from the tray, and you must start over. We placed wooden trays of food on two tables. The food was the same as at A pa lo lon's home, except there was no sugar because Father doesn't like sugar. When we finished, my family unrolled a new blanket on a couch in Room 4. Mother brought a piece of blue silk from Room 2 and put it on the blanket, which designated the *bla ma's* seat. Mother proudly announced that two great *bla ma* had previously sat on this same piece of blue silk in our home.

The *bla ma's* assistant phoned and said they had departed the monastery. Father immediately left to wait for the *bla ma's* arrival on the main road, the southwest border of my home community, about fifteen kilometers away. Though it took more than two hours from the monastery to reach my home community, Father went to wait for them early to be sure not to miss their arrival.

Ma ma came to greet A che and chatted with her. They hadn't seen each other for years, but soon Ma ma needed to return after two cars with guests reached her home. One guest was an old woman, A sgang, who had come with her youngest son, Gnam lha thar, from Radmar Ravine in the local community, about twenty kilometers from my home. A sgang's husband was A pa lo lon's only paternal uncle. Father often visited A sgang and her sons' home. They are friends as well as relatives. A pa lo lon told me that the *bla ma* is A sgang's paternal relative, although he didn't know the exact relationship.

"A lags is coming!" someone suddenly shouted, and we all rushed outside.

Most of my paternal uncles and aunts had arrived by this time. When the *bla ma's* car appeared at the foot of a mountain range about one and a half kilometers from our house, A dga' and Gnam lha thar blew conch shells. A pa lo lon and older elders prayed loudly and took off their hats while females removed their scarves to greet the *bla ma*. As the *bla ma's* car rolled to a stop in front of my home, female elders and other women, including Mother, prostrated toward the vehicle. Meanwhile, A pa lo lon and other male adults bowed their heads. A pa

lo lon walked forward and bowed to the *bla ma*, who opened the car door and got out with a backpack. Three other monks immediately got out of the car. Two rushed to the trunk, opened it, and took out some packages. Some visiting men helped the monks.

The *bla ma* inquired, "Which room?"

I led the *bla ma* to Room 4, while the other three monks followed with small gift packs of biscuits and candies with *kha btags*. We were a little surprised, not expecting more than two monks. However, there was enough room for all the guests. More monks than expected was considered good fortune and delighted my paternal grandparents and parents.

Milk tea was offered to the *bla ma* and monks in Room 4. The *bla ma* told us to make a huge incense offering. Thick smoke rolled out as A pa lo lon, and A dga' added more dry livestock dung to the incense altar in front of my family's house. After sipping tea, the *bla ma* asked the three monks to leave for a while because it is taboo for monks to listen to '*Pho lung* chanted by others. As the ritual was about to begin, elders knelt before the *bla ma*, eager to hear his chanting, and my parents told me to serve the *bla ma* whatever he needed.

The *bla ma* asked for the plate of meat to be removed from the table and lit a stick of incense he had brought. He took out a scripture volume from his bag, unwrapped its yellow cloth wrapper, and told me to get a bowl of clean water. He was ready to chant '*Pho lung*.

I rushed to Room 1 and saw Mother and two of my aunts preparing food for the *bla ma* and the other guests. The *bla ma* had already started chanting when I returned to Room 4 with the bowl of water. The *bla ma* placed the bowl of water on the table near his book. Elders sat in a row in front of the *bla ma*, other men sat behind the elders, and other men chatted outside in front of Room 1. Father chatted with the *bla ma*'s assistant outside. The other two monks were in the car.

The *bla ma* blew into the bowl of water several times after about an hour of chanting and called the elders to come near him. The elders stretched out their hands to the *bla ma*, who dribbled drops of water from the bowl of water on their palms, one by one. The elders sipped drops of water and wetted their foreheads with what remained.

The *bla ma* said it would be good if younger people participated. '*Pho lung* is not something you need to hear only when you are older. It also benefits younger people. If you listen to it from when you are very young, you feel less pain when you are old and about to encounter death.

Mother has a strong religious belief but could not participate when the *bla ma* was chanting because she was fully occupied preparing food.

When the *bla ma* summoned the monks to Room 4, we offered meat and dumplings in soup. The *bla ma* ate very little. He was on his way somewhere else and in a hurry. A dga' and other men prepared gifts for the *bla ma*, so only A sgang talked to him. Other women were serving the *bla ma* and other monks in Room 4.

After the meal, the *bla ma's* assistant asked the *bla ma* to *rab gnas* 'purify by chanting' in Room 2 and other rooms as Father wished. The *bla ma* and the other three monks went to each of our rooms with a bowl of barley grain and flung the grain everywhere in the rooms while chanting.

After the *bla ma* and monks completed this ritual, the *bla ma's* assistant announced it was the right time to offer *kha btags* to the *bla ma*. So we all lined up, each of us offering a *kha btags*. The *bla ma* held his chanting beads in his right hand and touched them to our foreheads lightly when we bowed in front of him. Everyone felt satisfied. Meanwhile, A pa lo lon offered 2,000 RMB to the *bla ma* with a *kha btags*, and Oldest and Youngest uncles each offered 500 RMB. Father offered 2,000 RMB; A sgang's youngest son, Gnam lha thar, offered 1,000 RMB, and others offered several hundred RMB. The three other monks each received fifty or one hundred RMB gifts from each family.

Although protesting that it was all too much, the *bla ma* accepted all the gifts as it was our wish.

The *bla ma* and monks left after purifying my paternal

grandparents' home, where they had eaten rice with *gro ma* '(*Potentilla anserine* L) 'wild yams' mixed with ghee. Youngest Uncle's wife had prepared this food at my paternal grandfather's home. The *bla ma* preferred this food because it had no meat.

After the *bla ma*'s departure, people from nine families, including five elders counting my paternal grandparents, gathered in Room 2 and ate together. Mother said the *bla ma* had brought some bags of candies and small boxes of biscuits. She and I divided them into nine bags, which our guests were eager to take home because they were from the *bla ma*. Our guests decided to leave after the meal. My parents presented a piece of tea brick and ten RMB to each of the three visiting elders. A pa lo lon gave one apple to each woman and a pack of Yunyan⁶² cigarettes to each male guest. They initially refused, but he insisted it was also a Lo sar gift. As the elders were about to leave, A che said loudly that I needed to find a wife; otherwise, Mother would be worked to death. All the men laughed and agreed. I lowered my head, not knowing how to reply.

Brother escorted A che to her home in my family's car. She appreciated the great thing my parents had done so much that she wept as she left. She was too old to travel comfortably, and it had been many years since she had attended a *bla ma* chanting session.

My youngest paternal uncle had bought a second-hand car a month earlier. Mother reminded Father that Youngest Uncle had driven the small car to our home for the first time. My parents gave fifty RMB and a *kha btags* to congratulate him.

While the *bla ma* had been chanting in my home, my family's watchdog had suddenly broken free from its chain and wildly rushed about in all directions. It was the first time this had happened. Mother thought it was a good omen. I wanted to laugh. Later, when I mentioned this to A pa lo lon, he said Mother was right. The Year of the Dog was coming, and there was a saying, *Khyi thang la bud na stag yin* 'Dogs become tigers when they are free from their master', and agreed it was a good omen.

Eventually, our house was empty of visitors and quiet. Our busy

⁶² See an image of this cigarette at <https://bit.ly/2n7EgY8>, (accessed 27 September 2019).

day was over. I saw Mother cleaning the bowls visitors had used in Room 4, so I helped her. She reminded me that a *bla ma*'s table and seat were not cleaned for seven days after his visit.

Father rushed into Room 4 and told Mother not to feed the *bla ma*'s leftovers to the dog. Instead, he would eat them, which he thought would bring good fortune. I was a bit shocked but said nothing. Mother never let us eat visitors' leftovers. Whenever a stranger arrived, Mother served the guests her best, but after they left, Mother filled the guest's bowl with ashes and did not touch them for several days to avoid disease and evil.

I was surprised there had been little conversation between the *bla ma* and my grandparents and parents. The *bla ma* chanted, and whether elders understood the meaning didn't seem to matter. They listened and prayed to the *bla ma*, prostrated, offered food to the *bla ma*, and presented gifts such as *kha btags* and cash. That's all. Nevertheless, they all agreed it was one of the most meaningful days of their lives and were very satisfied with everything that had transpired.

At around five-thirty PM, my parents decided to visit Mother's sister's home and her husband, Bsod nams tshe ring, who had just returned for Lo sar from a hospital in Zi ling where he had been treated for intestinal cancer. Brother and I went to have dinner at my paternal grandparents' home. My parents returned home around midnight.

FIG 16. Ma ma (right) came to greet A che (left) and chatted with her in Room 1.



FIG 17. Elders listen to the *bla ma* as he chants during a ritual.



FIG 18. The *bla ma* blew into the bowl of water several times at the end of his chanting and called the elders to come near him. The elders stretched out their hands to the *bla ma*, who put drops of water from the bowl of water on their palms. The elders sipped these drops of water and wet their foreheads with what remained. The water was considered holy. Drinking some and wetting your head, chest, and belly with this water was a blessing.



FIG 19. The upper *kha btags* was what my family had prepared before the *bla ma*'s arrival, and the *bla ma* left the lower *kha btags* upon his departure. Mother told me that neither a *bla ma*'s nor a monk's table and seat were cleaned for seven days after this ritual. However, since Lo sar was about to approach, we cleaned it on Lo sar Eve.



THE TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY OF THE TWELFTH LUNAR MONTH (13 FEBRUARY 2018)

Father's grinding *gro ma* with a *lag skor* 'stone grinder' woke me. He said the yams were hard to grind because they weren't dry enough, and gave up. My parents decided to roast the *gro ma* in a pot with sand Father had brought in a bag from a sandy area near the township town. Mother poured sand into a pot and heated it on the stove. After it was hot, Mother added *gro ma*, stirred it, and then strained it through a sieve. I told Father I would grind the wild yams after Mother roasted them. I soon got up, realizing that there were many things I needed to do, such as making *thud*⁶³ and *zhun* 'Tibetan cakes'.⁶⁴ I also needed to help Ma ma make dumplings. It was going to be a full day!

I asked them about their visit the night before. Father replied Bsod noms tshe ring felt better at home than at the hospital and added, "His family was surprised that they had about eighty visitors from our home community when he was hospitalized in Zi ling. Before this time, Bsod noms tshe ring's family members had never visited a patient in Zi ling."

This was reasonable because it took at least a half-day to reach Zi ling by car from my community. The visitors also didn't understand Chinese and were unfamiliar with Zi ling streets.

Mother went to milk the cows, and Father prepared straw for the sheep. I started working on the remaining roasted *gro ma*, which were now much easier to grind. Meanwhile, I thought about Bsod noms tshe ring and hoped he would improve. Every time New Year approached, my siblings and I looked forward to special Lo sar gifts from his family. Mother's sister prepared, for example, a bottle of high-quality liquor for Father, a new robe or a coat for Mother, and cash for my siblings and me, and sometimes an additional sheep *brang 'go* 'upper chest' (see FIG 25) or *tshang ra* 'rump with the tail attached' (see FIG 26). I prayed and hoped Uncle Bsod noms tshe ring would

⁶³ *Thud* is made from a little boiling water mixed with wheat flour, melted butter, bits of dried cheese, boiled *gro ma*, a little salt, and a little sugar.

⁶⁴ *Zhun* is made of a mixture of melted butter, bits of dried cheese, *gro ma* powder, and a little brown sugar.

recover soon and his family would have a happy life in the coming year.

Father went to the township town to pick up Sister, who was coming home from her part-time job in Zi ling. Father goes to the township town almost every day. He needs to do nothing special there, but it is his habit. Once, he explained, "I need to go to the township town often. Our home is far from other families, and phone signal conditions are deplorable. It's hard to get news without going to the township town and meeting and chatting with others."

In contrast, Mother goes to the township town only three or four times a year. When she does go, she wears her best robe and puts a small amount of cash in her robe's rolled-up sleeve. She gets money from Father and sells the hair she collects when combing her hair to a Chinese merchant who visits each household on the pastures. He rides a bicycle or motorcycle and brings various utensils to trade. Father gives Mother fifty to one hundred RMB when she goes to the township town. He thinks it is unnecessary to provide extra cash since he buys everything the family needs, including clothes for Mother. Until about 2014, Father and Mother used to go to the township town by motorcycle. Father would meet his male friends while Mother met up with her female relatives with whom she had earlier made an appointment. She would buy a tea brick, a small plastic bag of salt, a sieve, pot-washing brushes, bed covers, and scarves from an open market in the township town where things are cheap. They also ate at a Muslim noodle restaurant. Mother bought extra packs of snacks for gifts and us when relatives visited. We were not allowed to touch them. Mother often kept them in a wooden box with a huge rusty lock. She hid the key to the lock where we couldn't find it. After returning with Father in the early afternoon, Mother said she couldn't really enjoy her time in town because she would think about our livestock and worry that Brother or I would not take good care of our sheep or newborn lambs or forget to feed our watchdog.

Mother's biggest shopping day is a few days before Lo sar when my parents shop together, purchasing food for Lo sar. While others also shop during these days, it is unusual for local couples to shop together.

Grinding *gro ma* into powder is challenging. It took an hour for me to grind two kilograms of *gro ma*. Mother once tried to make *zhun* with boiled *gro ma*, but we later found the cake had cracked, which Father blamed on the boiled *gro ma*. The cracked cake wasn't attractive, especially when offered to guests. Mother never made *zhun* with boiled *gro ma* again, though it was delicious.

One of Father's friends from Mgo log had given him five kilograms of *gro ma* of much better quality than what we could buy from the Muslim merchants in our township town for about 140RMB per kilogram in 2017, which was considered very expensive. Prices were higher during Lo sar. When I was a child, locals dug *gro ma*, but I have seen no one digging it locally for years. Digging *gro ma* is hard work. You must dig out a lot of earth to get a few *gro ma*.

After I finished grinding the *gro ma*, I went to my grandparents' house, where Mother was helping Ma ma and Dga' skyid lha mo make dumplings while chatting and laughing on the sunny, glass-enclosed porch. Ma ma's laughter was particularly energetic and infectious.

As usual, ma ma warmly asked me to have tea and food. I replied that I had already had breakfast. A pa lo lon had gone to herd my family's sheep with Brother on the other side of the hill in my family's winter pasture. Ma ma told Mother she could leave so she could do chores at our home. Ma ma understood Mother needed to do a lot of work, such as making *zhun* and *thud*.

After Mother left, I thought making dumplings would be difficult without her help. I relaxed when I realized Dga' skyid lha mo was skilled in dumpling-making. I had wanted to learn this skill and often made *phye leb* 'dough wrappers', but I was never the real dumpling maker. Mother had never let me make dumplings, worrying I would waste dough and filling. She also told me I would ruin our dumplings, which would be embarrassing if our guests noticed. I have learned how to cook from Mother, but not how to make dumplings.

I was glad I could practice making dumplings with Ma ma and Dga' skyid lha mo. I said I wanted to make dumplings if Dga' skyid lha mo would instruct me. Ma ma couldn't see very well, but she still made lovely dumplings after years and years of practice. Dga' skyid lha mo giggled after seeing the difference between her dumplings and mine. I made progress but could see the mutton dumplings I made were too ugly for their guests, so I quit and concentrated on making dough wrappers. It took about two hours to finish making dumplings, but I wasn't tired. Ma ma was talkative, and time passed quickly. She told Cousin and me things about Father and Uncle's childhoods and current community news that I hadn't heard.

When I returned home, Mother had almost finished making a platter of *thud* and was about to make another one for us to eat. A big pot with a little water was boiling on the stove. She poured wheat flour into the water, mixed it with melted butter, stirred it with a wooden stick until it cooked, and added bowls of bits of dry cheese, some bowls of boiled *gro ma*, a little salt, and a little sugar. Next, she moved it onto a cutting board and shaped it into a rectangle. The rest of the work was for Brother, who artistically decorated the *thud* surface with melted butter and candy.

Just before Lo sar a year earlier, some of our relatives came to my home from about ten kilometers away with plates of Tibetan cake and asked Brother to decorate them so their guests would find them more attractive.

Mother asked me to take a bowl of *thud* to Ma ma and Dga' skyid lha mo. Ma ma tasted it and said it was authentic *thud*; that it reminded her of the delicious *thud* that elders made when she was a child. Indeed, Mother learned this skill from her mother, who passed away in 2008. Ma ma returned my family's bowl with some candies, keeping with local custom not to return an empty container.

A pa lo lon and Brother returned from herding sheep at around one PM. A pa lo lon reported he and Brother had gone to a small ravine in my family's winter pasture. He said my family's winter pasture was considered the best campsite when he was a child. The wealthiest families from Rta ra Community had camped around the ravine just before the period of social chaos and probably lost some of their

treasures or had hidden some there when they were escaping from the Red Army in 1958. He encouraged Brother and Mother to carefully look for treasures when passing through the ravine. He was sure that we could find treasures there.

After lunch, Mother started making *zhun*. She melted butter in a pot. Once liquefied, she reduced the heat, added bits of dried cheese and *gro ma* powder, and mixed in a little brown sugar. She made three plates of *zhun*. Two plates were for guests in Room 4, and one was for my paternal grandparents as a Lo sar gift. She also made two bowls of *zhun*. One was for her sister as a Lo sar gift, and one was for her female friend. She put all the *zhun* in a corner of Room 3 to solidify. Meanwhile, Brother was smoking, considering how to decorate the *zhun* and *thud*.

Dga' skyid lha mo came in the afternoon, and Mother sent her back with some *zhun* in a small bowl. She wanted A pa lo lon and Ma ma to taste the fresh *zhun*. Dga' skyid lha mo soon returned with an apple in the bowl.

Mother was looking forward to Sister's arrival and was planning to cook her favorite food, fried mutton dumplings, for supper. Father and Sister arrived at around five PM with potatoes, carrots, cabbage, green pepper, mushrooms, pak choy, leeks, green onion, bunches of spinach, and a box with six bottles of liquor. Sister had bought a jacket for Father, one for Brother, and a grey sweater for Mother. Our family was now united. Our parents were thrilled that night. Once Sister and I had started school, my family could be together only twice a year for about ten days.

FIG 20. On Ma ma's glass-enclosed porch, Mother (right) helps Ma ma (left) and Dga' skyid lha mo (center) make dumplings while chatting and laughing in the sunshine.



FIG 21. Boiling *gro ma* in Room 1.



FIG 22. *Thud* that Mother made on a cutting board. Brother later decorated the top with butter and haws.



FIG 23. Two platters were filled with *zhun* and melted butter was poured on the surfaces. After the butter solidified, Brother designed and attached the red patterns and figures made from haws for the Year of the Dog.



FIG 24. *Zhun* is Lo sar food local women make at home. My family carefully cut the *zhun* into pieces and stacked them on a platter. Lo sar visitors like to have a taste of *zhun* since it is made individually by each hostess.



FIG 25. A sheep *brang 'go* 'upper chest' (Khri ka County Town, 9 March 2020, Rdo rje dpal 'byor).



FIG 26. A sheep *tshang ra* 'rump with the tail attached' (2020, Dpal rgyal).



FIG 27. A yak *brang* 'go 'upper chest' (Ya rdzi Salar Autonomous County, 7 March 2020, Blo bzang).



THE TWENTY-NINTH DAY OF THE TWELFTH LUNAR MONTH (14
FEBRUARY 2018)

Today was the second to last day of the lunar calendar, the day when every family enjoys a special meal locally known as *dgu rgyags*. Everyone, especially children, looked forward to this day. Mother used to tell us that we should behave very well on these last two days of the year and during the first day of Lo sar. We should talk to each other very nicely and use nicknames. For example, I normally called mother A ma 'mother', but today I called her Ma lo 'dear mother'. The latter is considered more endearing. Our family would have no conflicts in the coming year if we did this, which we believed and did our best to be nice to each other. Mother would forgive us no matter what bad things we did these days.

Today was when men rebuilt the *bsang khri*, and women repaired the stove. However, in my family, Mother did it all. The *bsang khri* behind our house was used only during Lo sar. It was often damaged by sheep rubbing against it and climbing on top of it. Cracks in the stove were repaired by smearing mud on them.

My family has three *bsang khri*: one in front of our house, one just behind the house, and another on the hilltop behind our house. The *bsang khri*, about eight meters in front of our house, is the only one we use to offer incense daily. Mother offers incense on this *bsang khri* at least twice a day because she is the one who often stays at home. She prays for me and my siblings' health. I don't remember a time she prayed for herself. The *bsang khri* behind our house was made of adobe until Brother built a brick one in 2015, so Mother no longer needed to repair it for Lo sar. The one on the hilltop was the biggest, but my family hadn't offered incense there for about fifteen years. The hill was in our winter pasture, where there was a lot of grass in winter. We worried the grass would catch fire.

Our parents make three temporary, small *bsang khri* from soil near the *bsang khri* behind our house every year. Mother said they were for the three men in my family. Mother urged me to use clean soil when I told her I would make them.

"Where can I get such clean soil?" I thought, but soon found a

place where no one ever urinates near the water tank. While I was making the *bsang khri*, Mother was collecting sheep dung pellets from Enclosure 1. She collected the pellets one day and did not collect them for another couple of days. She had planned this routine so she wouldn't dirty her new clothes at the beginning of Lo sar and also have more time to serve our Lo sar guests. If Mother didn't collect the sheep pellets for two or three days, the pellets would be crushed or broken into pieces by the sheep's hooves at night, and then they didn't burn well later when used for fuel. An accumulation of sheep pellets from infrequent cleaning also made the sheep uncomfortable.

Later, Sister came and asked what the three small *bsang khri* were for. I repeated what Mother had told me. Sister complained that she didn't have a *bsang khri* and asked me to make one for her. I didn't know how to deal with this. I thought three was a good, auspicious number, and making another was inappropriate and that Mother would surely disagree, so I said, "There are six *bsang khri* in total, so you can have any of them."

She seemed to agree.

After making the three small *bsang khri*, I poured soil on all of the *bsang khri* except the one on the hilltop. Mother said this meant we renewed our *bsang khri* for the deities for Lo sar. All these processes are called *kha wur* in our local dialect. There are many small flat stones near the *bsang khri*, where I made the three little *bsang khri*. Brother had painted *ma Ni* on each of these stones, which made our *bsang khri* more attractive.

Father went to tend the sheep, which I hadn't seen him do for a long time. Meanwhile, Brother started working on a painting of Tibetan mastiffs he was doing for the Year of the Dog. Brother painted animals according to the zodiac animals every year when Lo sar was approaching. He had painted a golden rooster last year, which he posted on WeChat. Many locals used this picture when sending Lo sar wishes to their contacts.

I saw Brother and Sister cleaning the windows of our paternal grandparents' new house after I finished making *bsang khri*. I went to help A pa lo lon hang the prayer flags as he had requested the day before. He said today was the day to hang prayer flags and prepare food

in the guest room for Lo sar. Before we hung the flags, he wanted me to arrange Lo sar food in the guest room while Brother, Sister, and Dga' skyid lha mo were busy cleaning the windows. A pa lo lon did not need to prepare Lo sar food on the table in the guest room since we had done it the day before, but he hadn't offered Lo sar food to the images of Buddha and the deities. He gave me some attractive, small plastic plates and asked me to put an offering of food in them. After filling the plates with candies, biscuits, and apples, I put them on a cupboard in front of images of Buddha and the deities. The Buddha and deity images were on the left of the cupboard, and images of Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin, Hu Jintao, and Xi Jinping were on the right. Realizing that I had only put the offering plates of food in front of the Buddha and deity images, he suggested that I also put plates of food in front of China's leaders, so I did.

A pa lo lon brought three different prayer flags with different colors. A pa lo lon, Dga' skyid lha mo, and I hung one on a wooden electricity pole near his new red brick house and another on the original prayer flag pole in front of his old adobe-wood house located between my family's house and A pa lo lon's new house. I hung the third on the prayer flag pole on the hilltop behind my family's house.

My family invited A pa lo lon, Ma ma, and Dga' skyid lha mo for a *dgu rgyags* meal at my family's home that night. My grandparents reciprocated by inviting my family for lunch. Sister was helping them prepare when I reached their house. They cooked dumplings for us, and there was also mutton and pork. We ate very little because we wanted to eat more at the *dgu rgyags* meal. As usual, Mother ate almost nothing at my grandparents' home, perhaps because of the upcoming *dgu rgyags* meal, or maybe she felt embarrassed to eat very much at other homes.

A pa lo lon persuaded, " We understood that you were too shy to eat much the first time you came to our home as a new daughter-in-law, but you now have been a daughter-in-law for thirty years, so you should eat more!"

Mother protested that she was full, which I doubted. A pa lo lon said that when Mother first came, she ate very little but was still energetic. Not long after she came to his home, he followed and

observed her as she was herding yaks. To his surprise, she sang in a low voice and was full of energy, even though she ate very little. Mother was sixteen at that time.

Sister and I were responsible for preparing the *dgu rgyags* meal because we fry vegetables better than Mother. It was what Mother wished, and we enjoyed doing it. It also helped reduce Mother's burden. Sister and I decided to cook nine different dishes and started preparing the *dgu rgyags* meal at around two-thirty PM.

Meanwhile, Mother carried sacks of dry sheep and cow dung to Room 1 to ensure fuel wouldn't run out when we cooked later. She also brought a sack of sheep pellets that had broken into tiny pieces. On windy days, Mother used a shovel to winnow those from intact sheep pellets for my paternal grandparents and my family's *hu tse* to ensure we all slept on warm *hu tse*.

We finished cooking at around six PM. There were dishes of boiled mutton, sliced pork with onion, fried mutton dumplings, steamed dumplings stuffed with mutton and carrot, fried potatoes with mutton, fried cabbage, cold sliced tomatoes sprinkled with sugar, fried yak meat with mushrooms, and a clay pot⁶⁵ of mutton soup with vegetables. A pa lo lon, Ma ma, and Dga' skyid lha mo came and sat on the *hu tse* and chatted with Father while Mother prepared steamed dumplings.

Father was waiting with a ladle of water when we finished cooking and said, "Come quickly! We have already finished wetting our hands and head."

I stretched out my hands, and Father poured a little water on my palms. I sipped a little and wet my hair with what remained. Father wanted us to do this above the rubbish Mother had collected that day in Room 1, so the water dropped on it as we washed. Sister did the same. Brother brought firecrackers and lit them near the rubbish in Room 1. The loud popping sounds made the cat jump from the *hu tse*, where it was waiting for a chance to get food from the table. We all yelled, "*Lha rgyal lo!* 'Victory to the deities!'" The louder the sound of the firecrackers, the better fortune in the coming year. Mother took out all

⁶⁵ My cousin referred to this with the Chinese *huoguo* 'hotpot', which I use later.

the rubbish (no plastic, only soil collected from the room and paper from the firecrackers) she had collected from our rooms that day and discarded it in a southeasterly direction as our family's *gzhis dpon*⁶⁶ had advised. The direction we threw my family's rubbish collected on this day differed according to Bshad sgrub's divination. This was the moment we said goodbye to the old year.

We started the *dgu rgyags* meal when Mother returned. Father joked, "Our son and daughter went to school to learn how to cook, not to study books!"

We burst into laughter and talked a lot during the meal. Dga' skyid lha mo quietly said, "A kho, please cook hotpot again when Zla ba sgröl ma comes for Lo sar tomorrow. The food you made is so delicious!"

I realized it was her first experience eating hotpot, and I promised to prepare it again. At the end of the meal, Brother brought apples and candies.

A pa lo lon said, "I'm not going to answer nature's call as we are about to finish this meal. I don't want to weigh less before Gshin rje chos rgyal 'The Lord of Death' comes to measure my weight."⁶⁷

I hadn't heard this story for years. In my childhood, Mother often made dumplings for the *dgu rgyags* meal. She wrapped salt or dough into a few dumplings to see who would have good fortune

⁶⁶ A religious practitioner who visits a home when invited by a family. For example, in my childhood, my family's *gzhis dpon* was a tantric practitioner who conducted my family's annual ritual, divined, and was also invited when a family member was ill. However, since about 2009, a monk, Bshad sgrub, from Smar khams Community, has served as my family's *gzhis dpon*.

⁶⁷ See Tsering Bum (2013:95) for a similar example:

When we stood up and walked out of the temple hall, the monks grabbed hold of the last person walking out of the temple. This happened to be Sonam Gyal. "Come on, we want to see how much you weigh!" shouted the monks as one held Sonam Gyal in his arms.

"Let me go! Let me go, please!" Sonam Gyal cried out in embarrassment, struggling.

"Who's he? Which class is he in?" students whispered. Seeing Sonam Gyal's face as red as blood, the monks finally released him.

In fact, it is a local custom that after a feast, the host catches the last person and holds them in their arms, pretending to weigh them.

during the new year among my family members. Whoever found the salt or dough in their bowl was assured of good fortune. We each hoped to find this dumpling in our bowl. Mother said we should eat nine different foods on this special night; otherwise, we would be too light when Gshin rje chos rgyal came and measured each of us when we were sleeping.

Mother began cleaning the tables after my paternal grandparents and Cousin left. Father shouted excitedly that he had a New Year greeting for *dgu rgyags* from his WeChat friends and started reading it loudly. Mother also went to check her phone hanging from the window.

FIG 28. The *bsang khri* behind my family's house was made of adobe until Brother rebuilt it with bricks in 2015. It is about 1.5 meters tall. In front are three small piles of soil, the small, temporary *bsang khri* I made on the twenty-ninth day of the twelfth lunar month.



FIG 29. Mother sweeps sheep dung pellets into small piles in Enclosure 1.



FIG 30. Mother carries sheep dung pellets from Enclosure 1 and makes large piles, which she later winnows to separate *lud* from the pellets.



FIG 31. A new pile of sheep dung pellets (left), a pile of cow dung (center), and an old pile of sheep dung pellets (right, made several years ago). Mother did it all to provide cooking and heating fuel.



FIG 32. I helped A pa lo lon arrange Lo sar food on a table in his guest room on the seventeenth day of the twelfth lunar month.



FIG 33. Offerings in front of the Buddha and deity images, and China's leaders in A pa lo lon's guest's room.



FIG 34. A pa lo lon brought three different prayer flags of different colors. A pa lo lon, Dga' skyid lha mo, and I hung one on a wooden electricity pole near his new house (Dga' skyid lha mo).



FIG 35. One of the three prayer flags A pa lo lon brought hangs on the original prayer flag pole in front of his old adobe-wood house located between my family's house and A pa lo lon's new house.



THE THIRTIETH DAY OF THE TWELFTH LUNAR MONTH (15
FEBRUARY 2018)

"If you chant on this auspicious day, your merit will increase a trillion times," Father read from his *ma Ni dung sgrub gling* WeChat group that a monk from D+hiH tsha Monastery had established. Father reported to the monk the total number of his and Mother's chants every night. There were about thirty people in this WeChat group. The monk gave the lists to the monastery. The goal of this group is to chant *ma Ni* one hundred million times to achieve great merit in this life.

"I'm going to the township town to circumambulate the *ma Ni* hall and chant *ma Ni*. It would be great if you also chant today," Father said, donning his old robe.

"Remember to hang prayer flags after your brother gets up. Be sure you don't hang the prayer flags upside down," reminded Father.

Today was the day my family hung prayer flags on the hilltop behind our house. Father had chosen this auspicious day according to the Tibetan calendar a few days earlier.

Mother announced we had no candy and asked Father to buy some. It was needed when my family offered incense during Lo sar. My family often mixed candy with the incense we offered to deities during Lo sar. We generally didn't buy candies or beverages because the community leaders had made a rule forbidding this. Commonly, locals purchased various drinks, biscuits, and sweets, wasting lots of money on unhealthy food for Lo sar. In response, local leaders announced that families must stop buying beverages and candies for Lo sar. Most locals support the idea that we shouldn't turn Lo sar, our most auspicious time, into an adverse health event.

"If people shouldn't drink sugary drinks and eat candies, then deities also shouldn't," I blurted.

Mother glared at me and reminded me that we shouldn't say such things on this day.

Father left, and Mother went to milk the cows. Brother and Sister weren't up yet, so I sat beside the stove, sipping milk tea. I stood when I remembered it was time to feed straw to our sheep. I put three bales in a cart, pushed it near the sheep-pen, unpacked each bale, and

spread the straw in a line on the ground. Mother told me to deal with the other cart, which was full of ash from our stoves, so I pushed it to our field, about 200 meters from our house. Ash is fertilizer for the oats we cultivate to feed livestock in winter.

Mother was busy heating food for our watchdog when I returned with icy hands. In addition to adding wheat flour to boiling water at least twice a day, she sometimes fed the dog chopped up dead lambs fox had killed or sheep that had died from disease. She never forgot to feed the dog, believing that dogs are the final step before being reborn as a human in the cycle of karma. She had heard a *bla ma* emphasizing that a watchdog should be fed at least twice a day; consequently, whenever Mother cooks a meal for our family, she prepares food for the watchdog. Some local women often forget to feed their watchdogs, partly because there are so many weak livestock to feed every day.

After a while, Brother got up as Mother was about to collect the cow and sheep dung. Brother and I climbed up the hilltop with thirty green prayer flags. The hill behind my family's house isn't very high, so we reached the top in about five minutes. My family stopped hanging prayer flags of various colors after Bshad sgrub claimed that my family's color was green, which he said would bring good fortune and good health to my family. Every Lo sar time, and when Sister and I would leave for school, Father would tell us to hang green prayer flags on the same hilltop. I could see these flags fluttering on the hilltop in the distance every time I came home, which made me appreciate my family's concern and love.

Bshad sgrub has played an important role in my family's matters and Father's business, which directly impacts us. Father had a motorcycle before he bought a car. Bshad sgrub refused when Father invited him to my home for a winter ritual because he didn't want to endure harsh winter temperatures on a motorcycle. Father managed to find a local taxi driver who brought Bshad sgrub from Smar khams Monastery to my home for fifty RMB. When Bshad sgrub finished the ritual the following day, Father called the driver again, who drove Bshad sgrub back to the monastery for another fifty RMB. In 2014, Father decided to buy a cheap car, partly for this reason.

After about thirty minutes, Brother and I had finished hanging all the prayer flags, ensuring none were upside down. We then flung *rlung rta*⁶⁸ into the sky but only used three packs. Father didn't want to use many *rlung rta* in our pasture, reasoning that one *rlung rta* was poisonous enough to kill a flower.

We saw A dga' on a motorcycle coming to our grandparents' home. Later, A pa lo lon came and talked to Mother outside. I wondered why he didn't come inside and have tea. A dga' soon left with A pa lo lon on his motorcycle. This was unusual because people typically don't go anywhere on this day. "Maybe a close relative is ill, but who?" I wondered.

I asked Mother about it as soon as we returned from the hilltop. "I don't know either. Perhaps A dga' invited A pa lo lon for lunch."

I was unconvinced!

Our sheep went to the other side of the hill after eating the straw I had offered. Brother went after the sheep. Mother told Sister and me to clean all the windows of rooms 1 and 2 and provided warm water. We chatted as we cleaned. This took about two hours, which seemed very long, but Sister and I had an excellent chat. We had done the same thing the previous winter, chatting about our school life.

Father returned from the township town at around two PM and soon left again with some water containers in the car. Mother stayed in Room 2 for about two hours, chanting the whole time. She was fasting for two days. Father didn't return soon, so I was sure something was going on.

Brother and I began putting Lo sar food on the tables in Room 4 at around three PM after placing three small plates of food in front of the deity images in Room 2. Each of the three plates in Room 2 contained three fried bread items resembling animals, *rgyal bo dmar drus*, apples, small pieces of *thud*, and a few candies Father had bought. A small bowl of zhun, a bottle of liquor, and some firecrackers were also on the plates.

⁶⁸ Literally 'wind horse', it "is a small square piece of paper with a picture of a horse bearing a wish-fulfilling gem printed in the center, and a tiger, lion, garuda, and dragon in the four corners" (Thurston and Tsering Samdrup 2012:49). See a photo at <https://bit.ly/2TLdYrp>, (accessed 7 March 2020).

During Lo sar, we placed platters of food on each of the four tables in Room 4. About an hour later, there were two trays of fried bread, two platters of apples, a platter of *thud*, two trays of *zhun*, and a platter of cooked yak meat on all the tables, which was probably more food than was necessary for the number of guests who would visit during Lo sar. Nevertheless, it didn't look good if a table in Room 4 had no food during Lo sar.

Mother carried in sacks of dry livestock dung and put some on each incense altar to make it convenient to offer incense after midnight. The wind started blowing, and Mother soon appeared in Room 4 with a broom, swept up the dust, observed us, and gave suggestions about arranging food on the trays.

Arranging food on Lo sar trays required a lot of time when I was a child. Father, Brother, and I arranged food on the tables all afternoon. The food basins were larger, and the food they contained needed to be carefully stacked high, which was considered attractive. Food included *zhun*, fruits, biscuits, beverages, and various candies. Beverages such as Coca-Cola, Pepsi, Jianlibao,⁶⁹ and fruit-flavored drinks were placed along with plates of food on the tables, plus bottles of liquor and packs of cigarettes. This explains why a family made Lo sar purchases with a small truck.

However, this changed after community leaders made new rules out of concern for the locals' health. Around Lo sar, there was lots of attractive but poor-quality food sold in the township town. Nearby communities followed the example of purchasing better-quality food, which meant the small shops in our township town sold less food.

Later, Dga' skyid lha mo came to my home and talked about what she thought I already knew. One of our young relatives had committed suicide the day before. Cousin regretted sharing this bad news when she realized I didn't know, knowing Ma ma would scold her, so Cousin and I agreed to keep it a secret.

This young man's grandmother and A pa lo lon were cousins. A dga' and A pa lo lon had gone to the deceased's home. Father had also gone as soon as he got the news in the township town and had returned

⁶⁹ An orange-flavored drink, it was once a best seller in China, on par with Coca-Cola and Pepsi.

home to pick up A pa lo lon. He made an excuse that he would fetch water after learning that A pa lo lon had already gone with A dga'. The situation was much worse than I had imagined.

The deceased was about my brother's age and liked computers, though he had never attended school. He had been operating computers for about fifteen years at his home. His parents arranged his marriage when he was a teenager. Later, he made VCDs for local singers. I had watched some and thought they were done very well.

About two years earlier, I met him at a wedding. We chatted. He said he was working on a Tibetan cartoon based on the Tibetan novel *Klu 'bum mi rgod*.⁷⁰ He said, "Life is meaningless if we don't even know how to make a great cartoon!"

He was passionate about his work and showed me some of his creations. The characters and setting made me feel it was a real Tibetan cartoon.

Everyone from my home community knew this young man liked reading. Sometimes he wouldn't leave home for months when he focused on reading. Meanwhile, his wife did the home chores and herded livestock. His parents let him do whatever he wished. In autumn, a rumor circulated that he had become mad because he often argued with his parents. Some locals suggested a disease from his computer had infected him.

I didn't blame my parents for not sharing this news because we don't discuss such inauspicious things on this day.

This was the moment when we stopped expecting many visitors during this Lo sar, especially paternal relatives. Father returned in the late afternoon, and we cooked dumplings and mutton for supper. Mother sat near the stove and had only tea. Father described his time at the home of the deceased, where many people had gathered after learning what we already knew:

⁷⁰ One of the longest contemporary Tibetan-language novels, Nag po skal bzang wrote this work based on folklore surrounding the well-known figure, Klu 'bum. See Nag po skal bzang (2013), and Pad+ma rig 'dzin (2017) for more.

Yesterday afternoon, the young man told his family he would herd their yaks and asked his other family members to prepare the *dgu rgyags* meal. The family agreed, so he took the yaks to the hills near the house. About thirty minutes later, his family members felt something was wrong and found him hanging in an old cottage on the hill where his family stayed in spring and autumn. His family and relatives immediately took his corpse to the Yellow River and performed a water burial.

People don't bring a corpse into the home if a person dies outside.

My family members had planned not to sleep this night. It was Lo sar, and visitors would arrive. Brother and I also needed to make Lo sar visits.

Mother washed her hair in a metal basin, and Father washed his feet in a plastic basin. Brother finished his painting of dogs. While waiting for her turn to wash her hair after Mother, Sister considered visiting our maternal grandfather during Lo sar. I also needed to wash my hair, but since there was only one basin, I had to wait until Sister finished. Mother told me to check the fire in the stove in Room 4 to ensure the house was warm for guests. I added some *ra 'gyig*,⁷¹ which we use for fuel during Lo sar because it burns slowly and lasts longer than sheep pellets and yak dung, so we didn't need to stay near the stove, continually adding fuel.

I returned to Room 1. My maternal grandfather would turn ninety after midnight. Mother told Father that she wanted to visit her Father just after midnight since we didn't expect many early Lo sar visitors. She added that she would return soon after she greeted her father and presented Lo sar gifts. It is very uncommon for women to visit on the first day of Lo sar. I had never seen Mother visit on the first day of Lo sar. Father agreed. Mother had stopped visiting her father during Lo sar after her mother passed away in 2008.

Mother preferred to go with Brother by car, not feeling safe when I drove, so I suggested I accompany them.

"Two of us are enough. You need to visit our neighbors as soon

⁷¹ *Ra 'gyig* is solid sheep dung that my family digs from the bottom of Enclosure 1 in summer.

as we return," Mother said while combing her hair.

"That's right, you can also rest before their return," Father said.

I agreed, though I had been waiting for this day to visit my maternal grandfather. Upon reflection, I realized that if I went with Mother and Brother, the three of us would be considered too many, and locals would gossip, saying something like, "Did you hear? Three of their family members went to their mother's parents' home together. They were surely expecting more gifts!"

Mother started preparing Lo sar gifts for her father, including a yak *brang* 'go 'upper chest' (FIG 27), a small bowl of *zhun*, one hundred RMB, two *rgyal bo*, and two *kha btags*. She quietly asked without Father hearing if I had some ten RMB bills. I gave her thirty RMB, which was all I had in my wallet. She said it was enough. During her visit, close female relatives and friends she hadn't seen for months or a year would be there, and she wanted to present Lo sar gifts of ten RMB to each of them.

The Amdo TV Tibetan Lo sar program was on, but no one paid attention. Brother was about to climb the hill behind our house to have a better phone signal to post his dog painting on WeChat. Father was the only one who tried to sleep, but once his phone rang, he jumped up from the *hu tse* and rushed barefoot to the window where his cellphone was hanging. After the phone call, he read Lo sar wishes from his WeChat friends and did not return to the *hu tse*. Sister started making up and darkening her eyebrows after washing and drying her hair. Mother took out her new robe, sash, and clothes from the cupboard and unfolded them.

Time passed quickly. Father put on his black leather boots and new lambskin robe after noticing it was only half an hour before midnight. He added big chunks of dry cow dung to the stove and told us to prepare. Brother, Sister, and I hurried to dress. Brother and I also put on our leather boots and new lambskin robes while Mother went into Room 4 and boiled tea. Soon Father left with some dung embers for the incense altars. I followed with a flashlight. Father put fire on each altar Mother had already prepared with dry livestock dung.

A few minutes before midnight, I was told to check if the dung on the incense altars had caught fire. Once I saw the dung burning

fiercely in the wind, I rushed and reported this to Father, who took the incense bag and some fresh tea in a ladle with a bit of butter. He reminded me to bring the conch shell, some candy, and a fried animal-bread Mother had made. The fire on the altars was very strong in the wind, so we didn't need a flashlight. Brother and Sister soon came with firecrackers.

FIG 36. Mother purifies Room 2 with smoke from smoldering juniper before we arrange Lo sar food on plates for offerings placed before the Buddha and deities.



FIG 37. Brother with the green prayer flags he and I hung on the hilltop behind my family's house. We ensured no flag was hung upside down.



FIG 38. Goods on a table in Room 4. L-R: a platter of apples, two packaged disposable cups of milk tea powder, a platter of *zhun*, a platter of fried bread, two packaged disposable cups of milk tea powder, a platter of *zhun* and *thud* pieces, a bottle of liquor, and a platter of cooked yak meat.



FIG 39. Brother concentrates on painting dogs for the New Year of the Dog in Room 1.



THE FIRST DAY OF THE FIRST LUNAR MONTH (16 FEBRUARY 2018)

Father placed the incense, fried bread, and candies on the brick altar behind our house and sprinkled tea on these offerings. Praying and chanting loudly, he did the same at the other three small incense soil altars I had made in front of the brick altar. Just after midnight, as firecrackers rattled-tattled in the distance, Father flung fresh tea in the four directions and poured some on the fire. Meanwhile, Brother and Sister lit firecrackers that exploded with bright sparks as Father and I hollered, "Victory to the deities!"

As lights came on in A pa lo lon's house, Father continued flinging tea and loudly praying while circumambulating the altars in a clockwise direction. I blew a conch shell as I followed him. Brother and Sister were behind us. After three circumambulations and prostrations to the brick altar, we went to the incense altar in front of my family's house, where my family offers incense daily.

We repeated what we had just done and noticed a fire blazing on A pa lo lon's incense altar. After offering incense, we went to Room 2 to each do three prostrations. As soon as we reached the guest room, Mother served freshly boiled milk tea in new bowls. Each had three dates and a small piece of butter. We hadn't used the bowls since the previous Lo sar. Mother looked young and fresh in a lambskin robe that she wore only during Lo sar and at weddings. Her sister had given her this robe a few years earlier. My parents had stopped making lambskin robes for themselves when I was a child. When a lamb died, Mother skinned it, dried it, and then, after months of soaking in buttermilk, softened the skin by hand. She had stored these lambkins one by one since I was a child and explained she was saving them for new lambskin robes when her three children married.

We all felt special and renewed in our new robes. We had tea at tables with various Lo sar food in Room 4, spoke to each other politely, and offered and received things with both hands. The house was full of colorful clothes and food. I have this particular emotion only once a year during Lo sar. Our New Year started at this moment.

Father told us to prepare to visit our paternal grandparents and

added that what we had done earlier meant that everything would go well this year. Mother immediately stood and put a *rgyal bo*, *kha btags*, and ten RMB in each of our robe pouches. Father took a cooked sheep upper chest and led the way to our paternal grandparents' home. Brother, Sister, and I followed. It was twelve-forty AM.

After a few minutes of walking, we reached the home of our paternal grandparents. A pa lo lon had just finished offering incense, and Dga' skyid lha mo was boiling tea in their guest room. To our surprise, Ma ma was already up and dressed nicely. She came to greet us. As we stepped into their house, we said loudly, "*Lo sar bzang* 'Happy New Year!'" took out Lo sar gifts from our robe pouches and presented them as we stepped into their guest room. A pa lo lon, dressed in a robe he rarely wore, came to sit with us for Lo sar tea. A pa lo lon also had *rtsam pa* in a bowl. Father and our grandparents talked about our plans for Lo sar visits. When A pa lo lon learned that Mother and Brother were going to visit my maternal grandfather, he declared that he also needed to send a Lo sar gift. After sipping some tea, we got up, and A pa lo lon returned our *rgyal bo* and *kha btags*, plus fifty RMB each to me and my two siblings, and one hundred RMB to Father, despite our resistance. When A pa lo lon gave his Lo sar gift to Brother, he gently kissed his cheek.

My grandparents were very pleased with our visit.

I was glad that my paternal grandparents were near us this year. In the last few years, they spent Lo sar in their small flat in the township town, thirty kilometers from my home. Father, or Brother and I, needed to pay a Lo sar visit to my paternal grandparents despite the weather. Before they moved to town, they lived with their youngest son, Btsan mgon thar, and youngest daughter, Phyug mo skyid, in a house in another pasture in our community, which was about a ten-kilometer journey from my home. This was when Brother and I made a Lo sar visit in my childhood.

One Lo sar night about fifteen years earlier, there had been very heavy snow. Brother had driven a motorcycle, and I had sat behind him. Brother had extended his legs on both sides of the motorcycle to avoid falling. I sat behind him, sleeping in my new, warm robe. Later, I found his new boots were wet. I can't imagine how it felt, dragging his feet in

the snow all the way, but I had been happy and had soon forgotten. It was, after all, Lo sar.

Sister promised Mother that she and Father wouldn't sleep and would welcome guests if anyone came. I laughed. One Lo sar, we had all participated in a wedding, except for Sister, who stayed home to care for our house and livestock. She was around eight years old at that time. Two young guests had visited. Sister refused to allow them inside. She stood in front of our yard gate and said, "No one is in my home."

The Lo sar guests had left. We all burst into laughter after we heard this because we never refuse a guest entry to our house, especially during Lo sar. Later, Father apologized to these people.

Mother and Brother left, and Sister and Father went to Room 4. I returned to Room 1 to try to sleep on the *hu tse*. We usually don't have Lo sar guests until about four AM, though Mother never slept in case Lo sar guests did come. Sister and Father would try to stay awake for a while in Room 3 or Room 4 with Mother, but they would soon fall asleep. This year, we thought we might have had early guests if the young man's suicide hadn't occurred. We are neighbors with our grandparents and had expected many paternal relatives to arrive. If any Lo sar guest came to A pa lo lon's home, they would most likely visit my home.

Mother woke me up, and I realized she and Brother had returned. Still half asleep, I asked about A pa lo. Mother said that he had gotten up with great excitement and had come to talk with her. Mother and Brother had been his earliest guests. She said that Youngest Uncle, Btsan mgon thar, and his daughter, Zla ba sgrol ma, had come to visit my paternal grandparents and my home while Mother and Brother were at A pa lo's home. Btsan mgon thar returned while Zla ba sgrol ma remained at A pa lo lon and Ma ma's house. One or two representatives from each family were expected to visit all the neighbors. A pa lo lon was too old to visit, so two of my cousins represented my paternal grandparents' family in visits to other families.

At around four-twenty, I got up and washed my face. Dga' skyid lha mo came with Zla ba sgrol ma to go with me on Lo sar visits to our neighbors. Their hair was in small plaited braids, and they wore thin

colorful robes. They both seemed very cold, with red cheeks and trembling hands. Nevertheless, they were eager to visit neighbors, expecting many Lo sar gifts. I understood. Despite the weather or distance, I had never missed going on Lo sar visits in my childhood.

One dark, snowy Lo sar night when Brother and I were less than ten-years-old, my parents sent us off to visit our neighbors. Brother could locate each home because Father drew maps of each neighbor for us before Lo sar and had us commit the map to memory. We each held a flashlight, but I was still scared as I walked with Brother. I was so young that Brother had to help me pee, tie my robe again, and ensure I had not lost my Lo sar gifts. Eventually, after walking more than two kilometers across hills, we reached some homes, but we never felt cold or tired. After returning home, we compared who had the most Lo sar gifts of candies, apples, and beverages.

A conflict with two families in Rdo ser and my family meant no Lo sar visits with these families. There is also a family that none of our neighbors visit, even during Lo sar, because they were originally considered to have *sha rus mi gtsang pa* 'unclean flesh and bones'.⁷² When I was a child, my parents invited young men from this family to

⁷² *Sha rus mi gtsang pa* is the term locals use and identify *bse dri* "body odor (foul smelling)" (Goldstein et al. 2001:1,167) as one indication. Locals believe that the person who has *bse dri* cannot smell it. A second local indication of *sha rus mi gtsang pa*, is venerating *the'u rang*, which are considered to be demons by those who do not worship them. Marrying someone from a family venerating *the'u rang* is believed to bring misfortune to members of the family (or their livestock) that the spouse joins. Other comments on *the'u rang* include: "a sort of demons" (Jäschke 1949:236); "ཐེ་འར་ག་ [the'u rangs] (tēwuraŋ) a type of hungry ghost" (Goldstein et al. 2001:501); "ཐེ་རང་ [the rang] a set of demons" (Das et al. 1902:588); "A the'u rang is believed to be a demon, but The'u rang families do not consider it to be so" (Jixiancairang 2012:13); "Terang are powerful and invisible. They help and protect people and can make you rich by bringing you what you requested" (Rdo rje tshe brtan 2013:36); and "མྱེད་དང་གྱི་ལག་དྲུག་ལ་བྱི་ལའི་རྣམ་པ་ཅན་གྱི་ལྟོ་ལྟོ་ནི་ཞིག་ ཡིན་པར་ལེན། [rmongs dad kyi bshad tshul la byi la'i rnam pa can gyi 'dre gdon zhig yin par bshad] 'according to superstition, it is said to be a type of demon that looks like a cat']" (Pad+ma rdo rje 1989:336).

kill yaks and skin them for our winter meat supply. The family's father, Mkhas btsun, was a tantric practitioner whom locals invited to their home to chant. After Mkhas btsun passed away, his wife complained that her family had nothing and began begging our neighbors for things, including livestock dung to use as fuel.

Mkhas btsun's oldest son, Bsod b+ha, and youngest son, Ban de, were my family's daily visitors. Ban de often came to my home in the late afternoon and chatted with my parents, sharing stories about singing love songs and how girls had replied. He had an excellent voice and sang each song to my parents, who enjoyed listening. At around ten PM, he would leave and go night dating. Later, my parents bought their first cell phone, which he admired. After a while, that phone didn't work well, and my parents bought a new one that played MP3 files. One night, Ban de said he wanted to buy the old phone for 450 RMB the next autumn after selling some sheep. My parents agreed. Later he paid, and stopped visiting my home.

After washing my face and putting on my new robe, Mother suggested I wear Brother's new lambskin robe, bought for the 2017 Lo sar, which locals considered fashionable. I preferred my robe, because I knew some neighboring women would remember my brother's robe if I wore it and later make unfavorable comments, so I didn't change. Mother gave me a *rgyal bo* with a *kha btags*. Father gave me seventy RMB as Lo sar gifts for seven people over sixty years old and locally considered elders. I would give ten RMB to each. When we were about to leave, Mother warned my two cousins, "Don't eat anything and behave well while you are at other homes!"

"Ma ma already told us, so we won't eat anything," Zla ba sgrol ma replied.

I went with A dga' and Brother on my first Lo sar visit in my childhood. After walking for about thirty minutes from my home, we reached the first family. We sat on a sofa enjoying milk tea. The household head gave each of us cooked yak ribs from their stacked-up basin of Lo sar food. Uncle and Brother put them back on the table while I grabbed a big yak rib with both hands and started munching. I ignored Older Uncle's hint not to eat. A dga' was very embarrassed and uncomfortable. Later, my parents burst into laughter when A dga' told

them what had happened. This was a powerful lesson, and I never again ate food from stacked-up plates of Lo sar food at other homes. During Lo sar, guests don't eat while at other homes. It was rare to see anyone eating meat in Room 4 unless they were distant guests and stayed overnight.

My two cousins and I went in my family's car to A dga's home, about four kilometers from my family's house. "Happy Lo sar!" I greeted loudly as we arrived.

A dga' and his wife said the same thing and led us into their guest room. They were delighted I was doing Lo sar visits with my cousins and served milk tea once we were in their guest room, where various food filled the plates on the tables. They complimented my cousins on being lovely in their new robes and asked how much money they planned to earn in Lo sar gifts. They also asked about Brother, who I explained, was resting at home after visiting my maternal grandfather.

I had visited families during Lo sar with Brother since I could walk, and Brother was old enough to care for me. Following our parents' instructions, we never missed visiting a family. Brother and I were one of the earliest Lo sar guests among our neighbors. Consequently, most families didn't sleep because they were expecting our arrival. If we were even a little late, they asked why, indicating how much they anticipated our visit.

About fifteen minutes later, when we said we were about to leave, A dga' and his wife didn't insist we stay, understanding we had just begun our Lo sar visits. They immediately stood, returned our *rgyal bo* and *kha btags*, and despite my objections, gave me fifty RMB and ten RMB to each of my cousins as Lo sar gifts.

We thus started our Lo sar visits. Our neighbors had food stacked up on platters, as did my family. Some also had various drinks and beverages on display. Most of the men and children were out visiting, so the hostesses were the only ones at home. Clad in new robes, none of them slept that night. I was unsure if we would visit one family for Lo sar because they hadn't opened their yard gate until sunrise on the first day of Lo sar the previous year, despite visitors calling and knocking on the gate. Later, guests told the family how badly they felt

about this, so they didn't sleep this year.

Our neighbors were all interested in my two cousins and asked about them because it was their first visit. It was rare for girls to visit all their neighbors during Lo sar. Locals were delighted. I also felt comfortable because no one asked me if I was old enough to marry or if I had found a secure government job. We presented *rgyal bo* and *kha btags* to each family. Some families gave us beverages when they returned our *rgyal bo* and *kha btags*, and most gave three, five, or ten RMB to each of us.

After visiting about half of the neighbors, my cousins got carsick and asked me to take them home. I stopped the car in the middle of the road for fresh air and explained that we couldn't stop visiting. If we did, the families we hadn't visited would complain and criticize our families. A pa lo lon also would not like it. Finally, we visited all the neighbors with me, encouraging my cousins, "Let's try one more family and then see!"

It reminded me of a Lo sar in 2006 when I was around fifteen. Brother and I just had returned home after visiting all the neighbors except for one family in the west. It was about nine AM, and I was tired from walking all night and carrying heavy Lo sar gifts. When Mother told me to visit the final family before I went to sleep, I said, "That family is too far away! It's not worth going there just for some candy."

"No! No! No! Don't say that! Lo sar visits are not for candy! It's something we must do. Otherwise, they won't feel good since their family's representative visited our family early this morning," Mother explained.

After visiting all of the neighbors, we returned home at about eight AM. My cousins were satisfied with the cash they had received as Lo sar gifts but were exhausted from not sleeping. Father told me it would be great and helpful to visit Bshad sgrub at Smar khams Monastery.

Mother added that I should also visit her sister on my way to Bshad sgrub's quarters at Smar khams Monastery and prepared a *rgyal bo* with a *kha btags* and cooked sheep upper chest for me to take. Father added fifty RMB for Bshad sgrub and one hundred RMB for mother's sister's husband. Mother prepared another cooked sheep

upper chest and a bowl of *zhun* for her sister.

Father promised I could sleep as long as I wanted after visiting Bshad sgrub and Mother's sister. I set off, and after about forty-five minutes, I reached the township town where shredded red firecrackers fluttered on the street, and all the stores were closed except for a few run by Chinese.

I reached the monastery after another twenty-minute drive. Bshad sgrub was busy serving the many guests in his room. I presented the Lo sar gifts I had brought and was served black tea as soon as I sat at a table full of plates with cooked mutton, dumplings, apples, candies, and various beverages. I was repeatedly urged to have some food while we were chatting.

I learned that Bshad sgrub also hadn't slept because of Lo sar visitors. The dumplings looked very nice, and I praised his skill. Bshad sgrub explained that one of his guests had brought fresh dumplings the day before.

More visitors came. Noticing how crowded it was, I decided to leave. Bshad sgrub returned the *rgyal bo* and *kha btags* I had brought and added a pack of biscuits. He escorted me to the yard gate and returned to serve his Lo sar guests.

Mother's sister's family lived on the sixth floor of the tallest building in the township town. Four small apartments were on this floor, all owned by Mother's sister's family. I was not sure which apartment they were living in, but I knocked on the door to the apartment I heard guests' conversations coming from. Aunt's son opened the door, greeted me warmly, and led me to a room where Mother's sister and her husband, Bsod noms tshe ring, were chatting with a guest. Aunt and Uncle were glad to see me and stood. I presented the gifts I had brought. Bsod noms tshe ring was very thin and spoke quietly and slowly. He had changed dramatically from six months earlier.

He said he missed his livestock and wanted to go home, but his wife and relatives had persuaded him to stay in the township town because it was warmer, thanks to the heating system. They thought they would have few Lo sar visitors in the township town, but to their surprise, they had many. Children they had never seen came for Lo sar

visits in groups and excitedly left after receiving cash gifts. Aunt said that she gave either three or five RMB⁷³ to each child.

Aunt brought a plate of dumplings and told me not to be shy. I realized I hadn't eaten since the previous night's supper and was famished. I ate until I was full, not caring much about what others might think.

More visitors arrived, and I decided to leave. Bsod nams tshe ring gave me a bottle of liquor for Father and a box of cookies for Mother. Aunt suddenly put a piece of old wrapped plastic into my robe pouch and said it was my Lo sar gift. I later found it contained 200 RMB. She knew I would refuse, so she had wrapped it and put it in my robe pouch. I knew she didn't have much money because husbands never give much money to their wives. Mother later said that Aunt had saved money given by her relatives when they visited.

I tried to keep my eyes wide open to avoid an accident on my way home, not wanting anything bad to happen on this special day. Even a small accident was very inauspicious.

I got home at around twelve-thirty PM. Mother and Father hadn't slept. They reported most of our neighbors and some relatives had paid Lo sar visits.

I slept as soon as I posted some Lo sar photos with Lo sar wishes to my WeChat contacts.

⁷³ Three is considered an auspicious number, while five is convenient because it is one paper bill.

FIG 40. A *rgyal bo* bread made by Mother in a plastic bag with a white *kha btags* that Father bought. Mother made six of this particular bread. Each of my family members takes one whenever we make a Lo sar visit.



FIG 41. A pa lo lon and Ma ma's new house, where they celebrated Lo sar, was less than 200 meters from my family's house. Sister (right) and me (left) were on our way to pay a Lo sar visit to A pa lo lon and Ma ma at one AM on the first day of Lo sar (Dpal rgyal).



FIG 42. My cousins at a neighbor's home during a Lo sar visit. They did not eat, drank only a little tea, and sat seriously as Ma ma and Mother had instructed.



FIG 43. My cousins and I began visiting our neighbors at around four AM on the first day of Lo sar. It was daybreak when we visited the final four families. I took this picture after we had rested for a bit on the way.



THE SECOND DAY OF THE FIRST LUNAR MONTH (17 FEBRUARY 2018)

I got up at around seven-forty AM. Mother was cleaning Room 4. I refilled plates with sunflower seeds, the only thing Lo sar guests ate as they chatted during Lo sar visits. As explained earlier, Lo sar guests don't eat at other homes, so we didn't need to replace meat, apples, *zhun*, *thud*, or fried bread. Mother put some dry grass and dung in the Room 4 stove after removing the ash and put a kettle of water on the stove after building a fire. We usually had few guests on this day, but some neighbors hadn't yet visited, so we kept Room 4 warm, anticipating their arrival.

When I saw A pa lo lon and two cousins pulling a cart in front of their house, I asked Mother, who said she had no idea what they were doing and suggested I help. I then walked over to where my cousins were pulling the cart back and forth in front of their house. The cart had a broken kettle and a bag. A pa lo lon had one hand on the cart and pretended to push. I was puzzled. They stopped as soon as they saw me. A pa lo lon told me to go inside for tea before I could ask any questions.

Ma ma laughed when I asked her and explained that A pa lo lon did this every Lo sar, hoping good fortune would come in the New Year. She added, "Your A pa lo lon's father was a trader. He packed a yak with two leather bags, hung things like pots from the bags, and led the yak back and forth in front of the house for good fortune on the first day of the New Year."

I learned that A pa lo lon was planning to go to Zi ling to visit Uncle Klu skyabs rgyal, his second daughter's (Stag mo mtsho) husband, who had been hospitalized.

Two neighboring men soon arrived at my home by car and apologized for being late. The younger one had attended a boy's three-year-old birthday party at his mother's parents' home. The other had participated in a wedding the day before. The older one was the second postgraduate student among my home community members. He majored in Tibetan historical philology. Locals admired him.

I served the guests as we chatted about school life. Mother soon appeared with a pot of dumplings in the soup she had prepared in Room 1. We offered dumplings in bowls to our guests.

Father entered the room, saying that he and Brother would help Nor bu, a neighbor, to prepare for a wedding. His home was about two kilometers away. Father wanted me to take Lo sar gifts to Aunt Stag mo mtsho, his sister, who was herding her family's yaks on the autumn pasture about seven kilometers from our home. Her oldest son was with his father in the hospital, and her second son was herding sheep in their winter pasture. Meanwhile, her daughter was in their winter pasture house, serving Lo sar visitors.

Local weddings require help from many people. Helpers come to the home the day before the wedding and stack up various food on trays. Father liked taking Brother with him because our relatives and neighbors appreciated his skillful work and creativity. In terms of wedding preparations, they wanted his attractive arrangement of food on platters, as this is one basis for judging weddings.

Locals, including Mother, liked to talk about the food on platters at weddings. When I returned home from a wedding or a Lo sar visit, Mother often asked me if the food on the platters was arranged attractively and how many singers attended.

Our guests soon left, saying they would visit other neighbors and help Nor bu's family.

After Mother prepared and handed me a *rgyal bo* with *kha btags*, and a fruit-tin, I set off on my family's motorcycle to visit Aunt Stag mo mtsho and deliver our family's Lo sar gift. I entered her plain cottage, which was tidy and warmed by burning yak and sheep dung. She also used a solar electricity generating system.

She had just returned from a hilltop near her cottage in the autumn pasture, where she had been tending her yaks. Home chores kept her very busy, and she had not put on new clothes for Lo sar. I learned that her husband's health was improving, and he would return home after the hospital resumed a regular work schedule after the New Year holiday. She was happily surprised to hear A pa lo lon planned to visit her husband in Zi ling, adding that she and her second son had gone to our township town at six AM this morning by motorcycle to try

and send Lo sar food to her husband and oldest son. However, they found no vehicles going to Zi ling, so they had returned home after four hours of fruitless waiting.

After we talked for a while, I decided to leave. Aunt Stag montsho returned my *rgyal bo* and *kha btags*, added a pack of candy, and gave me three bags with apples, candy, and peanuts, explaining they were for my grandparents and cousins. She added, "Tell our grandparents that I can't visit because of the livestock, but I will visit after my husband returns from the hospital."

She then brought a box and said, "Here is the food. Tell your A pa lo lon he needn't take any food. This is enough."

She added that A pa lo lon didn't have to visit Zi ling and said, "A pa lo lon is stubborn, and it's hard to change his mind once he makes a decision."

Next, I went to Nor bu's home. Many cars and motorcycles were parked near their house. As I got off my motorcycle, two young men came, greeted me, and invited me inside for tea. Though I didn't know their names, they were familiar since we met periodically at weddings and other gatherings.

"How are the preparations going?" I asked.

"We have just finished putting food on the platters. Many people have come to help," one man replied.

I was surprised to see how quickly they had completed the work. It was still early. Some women were cooking on a temporary stove near the house. As I walked to the family's guest room, I heard adult men talking, joking, and laughing loudly from the house's glass-enclosed porch. They were sitting in a circle on carpets with trays of apples and cookies in the center. I greeted those who noticed my arrival. Most paid no attention, including Father. I walked to the guest room, three times larger than the room where the family often slept, ate, and cooked. Some young men, including Brother, were photographing food trays with their smartphones and comparing their phones to see who had the best camera and skill in taking pictures. The guest room was magnificent, with tables decorated with cookies, mooncakes, apples, pineapples, pears, oranges, and grapes. Various candies were on each platter. As I admired the platters of food, the young men complained

about the weak phone signal.

I was seated in the glass-enclosed porch with the adult men, who were all our neighbors and the family's relatives. We weren't allowed to help serve food because we were considered guests. Tea was served, followed by bowls of dumplings in soup. The elders continued teasing each other and laughing as we younger men listened and laughed with them. All the men refused a second bowl of dumplings. As mentioned earlier, guests don't eat much while at other homes.

The family brought a box of beer, bottles of red tea and Pepsi, and a bottle of liquor. Most young men preferred non-alcoholic beverages. Pad+ma yag, the head of Nor bu's closest neighbor's family, is in his fifties. He opened the bottle of liquor, filled three small bowls, and offered bowls to the guests one by one, refilling the bowls after offering each guest. Whoever was offered liquor used their right ring finger to flick liquor into the air before drinking all three bowls. The liquor was considered *ston chang* 'wedding liquor', which a family bought for a wedding and differs from *lo chang* 'New Year liquor'.⁷⁴

I left the porch after the meal. Four or five women had begun eating dumplings after serving the men, sitting wherever they felt comfortable outside the house, under the sunshine. They were close relatives.

A little later, the adult men decided to move to Pad+ma yag's house, about one hundred meters away. As the men left, Father tipsily said we should return home soon. The neighbor's guest room was as big as Nor bu's but fancier. A bright light hung from the middle of a reddish wooden ceiling. Small bulbs were arranged along the ceiling edges and flashed on the wallpaper of peafowl leather along new brownish-white curtains on the three windows of the guest room. Linoleum gave the impression that the floor was made of wood. I didn't realize it was plastic until I stepped on it. An old wood bed was covered with a new sheet and featured tidily folded blankets and quilts. Two

⁷⁴ Both *ston chang* and *lo chang* refer to liquor. The cost for one bottle of liquor that locals purchased in 2018 was twenty to eighty RMB in the local township town. When a family holds a wedding during Lo sar and the host opens a new bottle of wedding liquor for the visitors during the wedding, he makes it clear it is wedding liquor. Visitors feel honored, believing fortune comes when the host opens a new bottle of *ston chang*.

long couches were covered with rugs. On the tables, platters with carved patterns were filled with apples, pears, and mooncakes. There were also glass bottles of juice-flavored drinks, several bottles of red wine, and cigarettes. Opposite the couches, there was a huge flat television screen between a pair of loudspeakers on a six-meter-long TV cabinet. The speakers would blink in various colors when the TV was turned on. Men sat in order of age on the couches. We were served milk tea. Next, the older men were offered *lo chang*, while younger ones were offered Pepsi, red tea, and fruit-flavored beverages. A good singer was asked to sing, and his singing enlivened the party. Men enjoyed drinking while listening to traditional songs. An hour later, Father and Brother wanted to stay longer. Father and his peers enjoyed drinking, and Brother and some younger men were busy with their phones, so I decided to go home.

Once I arrived, I told A pa lo lon that Stag mo mtsho's husband was coming home in five days. He replied that he had already decided to visit him in Zi ling the next day, the third day of Lo sar. It was an auspicious day to go out, and he added that he should visit his son-in-law. "People will say nothing good if I don't visit my son-in-law. They'll say something like, 'Look! They're happily celebrating Lo sar while their son-in-law is in the hospital.'"

My grandparents and I decided to wait for the weather forecast on the A mdo Tibetan TV station, which soon announced that it would snow for the next couple of days, but this didn't change A pa lo lon's decision.

FIG 44. Local traditional weddings require many helpers who are often relatives and neighbors. Helpers (including Father and Brother) carefully stacked food on trays the day before the wedding in Nor bu's guest room. The presentation of these stacks of food is a factor in evaluating a wedding.



FIG 45. Adult men were drinking tea and liquor, talking, joking, and laughing loudly in Nor bu's glass-enclosed porch after helping Nor bu's family stack food on trays for the wedding.



FIG 46. Helpers are served dumplings in soup after arranging food for the wedding at Nor bu's home. Women and girls eat outside.



THE THIRD DAY OF THE FIRST LUNAR MONTH (18 FEBRUARY 2018)

The third day of the Lunar New Year is considered very auspicious. Many weddings and other celebrations are held on this day. While the first day of Lo sar is special, few weddings are held. Locals are busy visiting and presenting gifts. Most locals prefer having celebrations on the third day.

My family, except for Sister, got up at around four-thirty AM. On this day, we would be attending two weddings. One was at the neighbor's home where we had been the day before, and the other was at the home of Father's friend, Rnam rgyal, in a neighboring community. The wedding at Father's friend's home would be grand because it had been postponed for a year due to a death in the family.

My family planned that our parents, Brother, and I would attend Nor bu's family's wedding and next go to Rnam rgyal's family's wedding, which would start later than the festivities at Nor bu's family.

It was snowing heavily. I saw a dim light in my grandparents' house window and thought, "A pa lo lon can't make it to Zi ling today."

Mother began wetting and combing her hair while Father, Brother, and I were having breakfast. I went to A pa lo lon's house at around five AM and saw through their window that they were already up. Ma ma was near the stove while A pa lo lon was spinning a *ma Ni* wheel and chanting near the stove. My two cousins were loudly reading what I guessed was homework, but I realized they were chanting Tara from a scripture book when I entered. A pa lo lon said that he had to go to Zi ling; if he didn't, he would never be able to make a journey anywhere. He went outside and offered incense a second time to make a good start.

I told him I would find a vehicle to Zi ling and that if I didn't, I wouldn't go to the wedding. He laughed but still wore an anxious expression. I told him that Brother and I would return as soon as Nor bu's groom's escorts were welcomed into Nor bu's home, and then we could set off for the township.

He agreed.

I reported what A pa lo lon had said to my parents, who had already surmised he would insist on going to Zi ling. Father headed to our grandparents' home and told us to be ready when he returned. My parents, Brother, and I set off for the wedding in our car. It was very cold, and I started trembling. It was about five-thirty AM - well before daybreak.

We reached Nor bu's home and found several cars and motorcycles. Some were covered with snow. I guessed the owners were Nor bu's distant relatives who had spent the night there. We entered the glass-enclosed porch to the sound of a young man's oration from the family's crowded living room. Only a few people noticed our arrival. The young orator was Nor bu's close relative and was giving a combing-hair speech with excellent intonation and without any mistakes. The family's daughter sat on a piece of white felt as several women seated around her plaited her hair into small braids.

The man finished the oration, and the women continued braiding. We were invited into the smoke-filled guest room, where there was more space for the men, who were offered cigarettes. The men chatted about the weather. More guests arrived, jokes were told, and there was more laughter. Some had come from the township town and reported less snow on the way. Women dressed the bride as soon as they finished braiding her hair. A car with five people went to wait for and greet the groom's escorts, who arrived at around six-forty AM. It was so dark that we couldn't see them very well.

The groom and his escorts were led into the guest room, where they sat in order of age and were immediately served tea. They were all from our community, wore serious expressions, and talked less than usual, as if they were from other communities or did not know each other. A few local elders from the bride's side sat opposite the elders from the groom's side. Some locals stood inside, while others stood outside and stuck their heads through the guest room's windows, observing the groom's escorts and listening to the conversation between the elders and the groom's escorts. A woman appeared with two *kha btags* hung over her shoulders, holding a ladle in her right hand. She poured tea into the ladle, flung some drops toward the room's ceiling, and went outside the house to fling tea into the sky.

After a while, Father appeared with two *kha btags* over his shoulders. He opened a bottle of wedding liquor, poured some on the metal stove, and flames flared up. Men removed their hats and prayed loudly to their mountain deities - Bal bo, Brag dkar, and Yul lha. Next, Father went outside the house and flung liquor into the sky.

At around seven-fifty AM, Brother and I told our parents we would leave. They remained at the wedding. When we reached our paternal grandparents' house, A pa lo lon again offered incense as snow continued falling, and was relieved to learn there was less snow on the road from the township town to our home community.

We reached the township town at around nine AM and saw no vehicles going to Zi ling. Others were also waiting. We waited another twenty minutes. Usually, drivers approached, asked where you were headed, grabbed your bags, and talked to you in a friendly manner as though you were a close relative. But it was the beginning of Lo sar, so the drivers had gone home and were busy visiting and celebrating.

A pa lo lon anxiously suggested that we leave so we wouldn't be late for the wedding. I said that Brother could go to the wedding alone while I stayed until I found a car for him. A pa lo lon disagreed, emphasizing that we should not be late.

A pa lo lon finally agreed to go to Zi ling the next day if he couldn't find a vehicle going to Zi ling later that day. Stag mo mtsho's older son was with his father in the hospital, so if A pa lo lon reached Zi ling today, the son would meet him wherever the driver left him in the city.

Brother and I left for the wedding. It was still snowing. It is very uncommon for locals to be late for a wedding. Locals often arrive before the bride's or groom's escorts. After about ten minutes in the car, we reached the home holding the wedding. The bride and her entourage hadn't arrived, so we weren't late. As we got out of our car, several young men rushed up, greeted us, and led us to the family's guest room. Some men I didn't recognize greeted, "*Khyod yong ne?*"⁷⁵ 'You have arrived?'

I replied, "'O le, *khyod ra yong ne?* 'Yeah, you have arrived, too?'"

⁷⁵ LT: *Khyod slebs byung ngam.*

Guests were clad in new, colorful robes. Some men wore sheepskin robes, which were perfect for such weather.

The family's head was delighted to see Brother and me. I looked for a chance to be alone with him and presented the 200 RMB Father had given me earlier in the morning as a wedding gift.

An hour passed with no news from the bride and her escorts. Snow was falling, an auspicious wedding sign; however, some men worried the bride and her entourage would be late. Women and girls continually swept snow from the family's courtyard with long-handled brooms.

When the family head suggested we offer incense together behind their house, most men stood up and went outside. Brother and I followed. Everyone used the upper parts of their robes to cover their cheeks and ears, turning red in the cold.

One of the family's relatives phoned the bride's side, but there was no signal from the other side. Local guests continued to wait, walked about, joked, and smoked in groups outside. Some were from my home community. Brother and I joined them. We chatted about the wedding, the weather, and Lo sar. Some local young men got into a car to keep warm. A few young men who seemed to be students hid their heads in their upper robes, busy with their smartphones.

Attendants came and invited all the men to an empty sheep pen with a plastic roof. I entered and found it didn't look like a sheep pen and didn't smell of sheep dung. New, clean plastic sheeting covered the ground. Wooden short-legged tables had been placed near the inside wall. Platters of mooncakes and apples were on the tables. As we sat cross-legged on both sides of the tables, we were served hot tea in paper cups and small plates of steamed dumplings. The guests around me sipped tea. They didn't eat. I looked around. No one had touched the plates of dumplings. I picked up a dumpling with my right hand and started eating. It was a delicious mutton-stuffed dumpling. Others followed my example.

Guests finished their tea but only ate a couple of dumplings. After a few men stood, all the other men also got to their feet. As soon as we left, the family and helpers invited the female guests to the sheep pen for tea and dumplings. As the men scattered outside, some young

men watched the girls on their way to the sheep pen. It was the same at every local wedding. Although male and female guests are served separately, the host family ensures no one misses having a meal. Most female guests are reluctant to eat much in front of male guests.

I felt warmer after the hot tea and dumplings. Snow continued drifting down.

At almost noon, the family finally contacted the bride's side and learned that the bride's group was on its way. It was very unusual for a bride and her entourage to come to the groom's home so late.

The groom's family immediately chose three of the best cars owned by local guests and got ready to greet the bride and her escorts. A long colorful cloth was hung from each car's rearview mirrors. An older man was asked to get into the first car's front seat with a bottle of liquor wrapped in a white *kha btags*. Men, including me, soon filled the cars.

On the main snow-covered road, about five kilometers from the groom's home, we stopped and waited for the bride's side. Many passing cars on the expressway had rearview side mirrors with *gos btags pa* 'hanging colorful cloth',⁷⁶ indicating they were the bride's or groom's escorts. I also saw a bus with colorful cloth on its side-view mirrors. We supposed a family was holding a grand wedding. I had never seen so many wedding escorts except for once as a child, during Mother's sister's son's wedding. At that time, the bride had come with about seventy male escorts in a big Dongfeng 'Camio'.⁷⁷

Our welcoming group was tired of waiting on the expressway and began getting out of the warm cars. The men were again soon sharing cigarettes and smoking. I knew none of them. Some checked out the three cars and talked about their prices. Others listened. There were a few jokes. It seemed they didn't know each other very well. Most of us were young men.

⁷⁶ Locally, hanging colorful cloth on a car's two side rearview mirrors suggests a wedding. For example, when a bride and her escorts go to the groom's home, their car's side mirrors feature hanging colorful cloth. The groom's side adds a piece of long cloth to the car's side mirrors when they are at the groom's home on the wedding day.

⁷⁷ See <https://binged.it/2K2Ep8u>, (accessed 30 July 2019) for a photo of this truck.

Someone's phone rang, and we learned that the bride and her escorts had almost reached our location. Our group immediately lined up with the older men in front on the left side of the expressway. The bride and her escorts soon arrived in five cars. As the cars stopped near us, we all removed our hats and greeted in unison the first car where the bride's elder escorts sat, "*A zhang tshang, sku kyab ke bde mo yin na* 'Bride's side, how are all of you?'"⁷⁸

"*Bde mo yin, bde mo yin!* 'Very well, very well!'" replied the elder escorts in the first car.

As an elder in the first car got out and removed a bowl from his pouch, an elder from our side opened the bottle of wedding liquor and poured some into the bowl. The elder from the bride's side started loudly orating to the mountain deities, and most of the men joined in. The elder flung liquor into the sky several times, and then we walked clockwise around the cars of the bride's side one time.

Our cars stopped again when we got a half-kilometer from the groom's home. The men got out and circled the bride's cars three times while flinging liquor into the sky, chanting and praying loudly.

The groom's three cars led the way to the groom's home. About a hundred meters from the house, two local men stood on either side of the road holding a '*bab rten* 'long white cloth' above their heads high enough for a car to pass underneath. As the first car from the bride's side appeared under the long white cloth, a passenger's hand reached out of the car's window and took the cloth.

Local men greeted the bride's side a little way from the groom's house gate, where local women waited in a group. Local men greeted in unison, "*Ya... A zhang tshang, sku kyab ke bde mo yin na* 'Bride's entourage, how are all of you?'"

"*Bde mo yin* 'Very well!'" the bride's elder escorts loudly replied as the cars passed, moving toward the groom's home. As the first car of the bride's attendants stopped at the yard gate, a local girl the bride's age gave a *kha btags* to one of the bride's escorts through the first car window. The girl was given another white *kha btags* in return. Local women immediately placed a piece of folded white felt on the ground by the right car door. Two young men of the bride's entourage got out

⁷⁸ LT: *khyed lhan rgyas sku khams bde legs sam*.

of the car and helped the bride get out and step on the white felt. The escorts standing on either side of the bride held her elbows, supporting her. She covered her face with her sleeves and a face mask.

The bride's side presented a *thud* on a big wood plank, a sheep carcass, and a pack of mixed candy and fruits to the groom's family. The bride's escorts formed a line from oldest to youngest and entered the guest room.

Elders from the bride's and groom's sides joked before the wedding formally started. The guest room wasn't big enough for all the local guests, so some local men opened the windows, stuck their heads inside, and listened to the conversation.

After the ritual of flinging tea and liquor skyward, local women were told to enter the guest room and ask for *bu re* 'women's gift' from the bride's side. Elders of the bride's side and representatives of local women teased each other with humorous proverbs. Local women soon received a gift of good quality colorful cloth. Local women wanted to continue to tease the bride's elder escorts, but local elders told them it was enough as time was short. Good singers from each side sang back and forth.

About forty minutes after the bride and her entourage's arrival, the bride's side's younger men were led into the house's glass-enclosed porch, where they were seated while local younger women stood nearby. It was about two PM and time for love songs. All the local men were told to go to the sheep pen again for a meal, where we were served dumplings in soup. A bit later, we were given yak-milk yogurt. No one had a second bowl of dumplings or yogurt, though they were very tasty. The men left to listen to the love songs as soon as they finished their meal.

When we returned to the glass-enclosed porch, the local women and younger men from the bride's side were singing to each other. When the local women noticed the local men's return, they closed the doors and windows of the glass-enclosed porch. No local men dared go inside because some local women were their relatives. It was embarrassing for male and female relatives to listen to love songs together. However, some men wore masks and listened to love songs nearby. Other local men covered half their faces with their robe sleeves

and listened. Eventually, most men outside the porch were listening to the love songs.

I tried to take pictures of the singers with my smartphone, but a local woman stopped me, warning me not to make videos. I immediately put my phone into my robe pouch. I took my camera from my robe pouch a bit later and took pictures. No one said anything. It was understandable that they thought I might take videos and post them on WeChat, which most locals used. Humorous videos were widely shared. Such videos were often of locals making mistakes while giving wedding speeches or singing traditional songs. Later, local elders made a rule prohibiting phones from taking pictures or videos at weddings. However, local women were allowed to record the songs because locals trusted them, and most knew little about posting videos online.

At around four PM, the bride and her escorts departed as snow continued falling. Women were told to go to the sheep pen for their meal. Each man was given a wedding gift of a small pack of apples, mooncakes, and candies. At this point, Brother and I left for home.

This wedding was typical in my home community, except that tea was the only beverage served, and liquor was only served to the bride's escorts. Usually, liquor is offered to both the bride's and groom's escorts and local guests. Also, two meals were served. However, one was usually the case in my local community. "*Stag ra ston mor mying che, gyang ni ltogs ni de'i thu med* 'Tigers and weddings have a great reputation, but must endure the coldest weather and moments of starvation'"⁷⁹ goes a local proverb. Local adults and elders enjoy weddings, because there is plenty of food and interesting wedding speeches and songs.

After I got home, Mother asked about the wedding, and though I was exhausted, I reported everything. She asked about the number of guests and singers and which of our relatives had attended. She didn't often participate due to her home chores, so in this way, she learned vicariously about the events. I showed her the pictures I had taken, which satisfied her.

⁷⁹ LT: *Stag dang gnyen ston la ming chen po yod kyang, grang ngar dang ltogs skom chen po bzod dgos.*

FIG 47. The wedding was held in Rnam rgyal's guest room.



FIG 48. Platters of stacked food for the bride's escorts in Rnam rgyal's guest room.



FIG 49. After hearing no news from the bride's side, the groom's side worried and decided to offer more incense behind the groom's house.



FIG 50. Men offered incense and circled the incense altar, chanting and praying loudly.



FIG 51. Local men and boys were asked to enter one of the family's sheep pens a second time. New, clean plastic sheeting covered the ground. Wooden short-legged tables were lined up near the inside wall. Platters of mooncakes and apples were on the tables. As we sat cross-legged on both sides of the tables, we were served bowls of hot dumplings in soup and then yogurt in plastic bowls.



FIG 52. After the men and boys had eaten, the family and helpers invited female guests into the same sheep pen for tea and dumplings. At local weddings, male and female guests are served separately. The host family ensures no one misses having a meal. Most female guests are reluctant to eat much in front of male guests.



FIG 53. Once the groom's side received news that the bride and her escorts were near, the groom's family immediately chose three of the best cars owned by locals and relatives. They drove about five kilometers from the groom's home to wait and greet the bride and her escorts.



FIG 54. Our greeting group from the groom's side soon met the bride's escorts. As their cars stopped near us, all the men removed their hats and right robe sleeves. In unison, they greeted the first car where the bride's elder escorts sat: "Bride's side, how are all of you?"



FIG 55. An elder in the first car got out and took a bowl from his robe pouch. An elder from our side opened the bottle of wedding liquor and poured some into a bowl.



FIG 56. The elder from the bride's side began loudly orating to the mountain deities. Most of the men joined in. Then the elder flung liquor from his bowl into the sky several times.



FIG 57. When the bride and her escorts were near the groom's home, the local men greeted them outside the house gate, where the local women were waiting in a group. The local men greeted the bride's escorts in their cars, "Bride's side, how are all of you?"



FIG 58. Assisted by two male escorts, the bride got out of her car. A local woman and her companions helped her enter the groom's home.



FIG 59. As the bride and her escorts reached the groom's home, an invited tantric practitioner began chanting that the new young couple would have a good life.



FIG 60. Male adults and elders from the bride's side joked with the local men before the wedding formally started.



FIG 61. Unable to accommodate all the guests, some local men opened the guest room windows and stuck their heads inside. Others stood nearby, listening to the conversation between the bride's side and local elders.



FIG 62. About forty minutes after the bride and her entourage arrived, the bride's side's younger male escorts led them into the glass-enclosed porch, where they sat cross-legged on carpets while the local younger women stood about three meters away. Only the singers were served liquor in paper cups and bottles of beer. One man from the bride's side stood and began singing a traditional love song while walking toward the women. He held a yellow *kha btags* in his right hand and gave it to the woman he wanted to sing with.



FIG 63. The local woman who received the male singer's *kha btags sang* a love song in reply, attracting guests' attention. Some women stayed inside, listening, but were too shy to open the windows.



FIG 64. Another local woman sings love songs antiphonally with one of the bride's escorts.



FIG 65. A local woman listens to love songs at the wedding.



FIG 66. A local woman listens to love songs while recording them on her phone at the wedding.



FIG 67. Men and women who are relatives do not listen to love songs together. Consequently, some women hid their faces behind the window or covered their faces with masks while recording love songs with their phones from the window at the wedding.



FIG 68. Local male guests dared not enter the glass-enclosed porch because some of the local women inside listening to love songs were their relatives. It was embarrassing for male and female relatives to listen to love songs together.



THE FOURTH DAY OF THE FIRST LUNAR MONTH (19 FEBRUARY 2018)

My parents wanted Brother and me to attend a wedding early the next morning at the home of one of my maternal uncles near A pa lo's home in Ra dmar Ravine. We planned to spend the night at A pa lo's home, so we would not be late for the wedding.

Brother and I started for A pa lo's home at about one PM with Brother driving. On the way, we stopped at several homes for a Lo sar visit, as our parents had directed. The first visit was to my maternal grandmother's sister, Lcags mo byams. We entered her home and found her and her husband (Rgya mtsho) sitting and chanting on the *hu tse* in the family's cooking, sleeping, and eating room. They were surprised and pleased by our arrival. After greeting them, I presented our Lo sar gifts - a *rgyal bo*, a *kha btags*, and ten RMB to each of them. Lcags mo byams suggested we go to their guest room, but Brother and I preferred the room where the old couple was so I could comfortably chat with them. We also offered the two bottles of milk Mother had prepared. Mother often sent milk whenever Father or I passed through the area. Mother said the old couple needed milk for lunch when they were *sdom pa srung* 'not eating solid food'. Lcags mo byams considered the milk gift to be very special. "It was time for my family's milk cow to give birth when your mother offered us bottles of milk last year. And now, my family's milk cow is again about to give birth. What a good omen!" she commented.

As the old couple and I were chatting, their daughter-in-law returned from herding. She wasn't wearing new clothes and scolded the old couple for not seating us in their guest room, which was cleaner and where food was on the tables. I explained that Brother and I had insisted on staying where we were.

Lcags mo byams' daughter-in-law immediately put a pot on the stove to cook something for us. Brother and I refused and said that we were about to leave. She insisted, saying she would feel guilty if we didn't eat anything, but we eventually persuaded her not to cook.

About one and a half kilometers separate our maternal grandfather's and Lcags mo byams' houses. Originally, there were six

households - all A pa lo's relatives - between A pa lo's and Lcags mo byams' houses. Two had moved to the township town a decade earlier and were doing profitable business buying sheep from locals and selling them to Muslim merchants. Each had hired about twenty locals from our home community. Most of the sheep locals sold first went through them before Muslims bought them.

Father wanted Brother and me to make Lo sar visits to all these families on the way to our maternal grandmother's home. As a guest at a less familiar family's home, I felt awkward, so I didn't want to visit them all. Men made Lo sar visits, leaving their wives at home. I did not know most of these wives, so there was silence after talking for a bit. But if I didn't visit all of them, those not visited would learn about it and be unhappy. Consequently, visiting one family meant visiting them all.

Brother and I first went to A sgang home. She came out with her great-granddaughter as we entered the yard. She was pleased by our visit and smiled as always. She hadn't aged much. I think of her as an old woman with a wrinkled face. She lived with her fifteen-year-old great-granddaughter, who led the way to their guest room, which was small and cold. Brother and I presented *rgyal bo* with *kha btags*, plus ten RMB. Her great-granddaughter tried to start a fire in the stove and boil tea, but Brother objected. I explained that we were going to leave soon.

She replied, "There is no custom to leave without having a cup of tea, especially during Lo sar. Please stay for a cup of tea."

She eventually stopped insisting after learning that we needed to visit more families on our way to our maternal grandfather's home. As Brother and I were leaving after chatting a bit more, she returned our Lo sar gifts and gave us each twenty RMB. She felt guilty that she hadn't made tea for us and added that her sons had bought a lot of coal, but neither she nor her great-granddaughter knew how to keep a stove warm using coal as fuel. They kept their guest room cold rather than full of smoke from smoldering coal. When I asked A sgang why she didn't use livestock dung, I learned she had just come from the township town, where she lived with one of her sons, to spend Lo sar here and leave soon, so she had not prepared livestock dung for fuel.

Bde b+he, one of A sgang's daughters-in-law, lived next to A sgang. Bde b+he enjoyed hosting guests. When Father once had dumplings in her home, he refused a second bowl of dumplings, but Bde b+he insisted. Father refused again and covered his bowl with his fingers. Bde b+he put some dumplings through his fingers. My family and her family had camped together for many years in our summer pasture when I was younger. Her children were our playmates and yak calf herdmates. She treated her children and me equally, spoke clearly, and laughed loudly. She often hung a beautiful old milk hook⁸⁰ decorated with silver in front of her.

Bde b+he's oldest grandson appeared when Brother and I entered the yard. He led us to their living room, not the guest room. I asked, "Sister Bde b+de isn't at home, is she?"

The boy said she was at home, and I saw Bde b+he getting up from the *hu tse* when we entered her living room. She was pleased to see us, but her voice had changed and radiated little energy. She wasn't as energetic as before. We presented our *rgyal bo* with *kha btags*, plus a tin of fruits. There were a few platters of food, but nothing fancy. I learned she had returned from the Jo khang in Khri ka the day before. She and her grandson had spent Lo sar at the Jo khang while the rest of the family spent Lo sar at her son's home in the township town. She had left the hospital three months earlier and had circumambulated the Jo khang in Khri ka. My parents had not told me about Bde b+he's situation and later explained that they had forgotten, thinking she would not return home for Lo sar.

Bde b+he's close neighbor and daughter-in-law was Lha mo - A sgang's only daughter. I presented *rgyal bo*, *kha btags*, and ten RMB to Lha mo, as did Brother. She had a fair face and, although blind, always smiled. She had become blind a few years earlier. Father said that she liked drinking Pepsi before becoming blind. Her husband had gone to the township town every day and returned home with a bottle of Pepsi. Lha mo found this drink so addictive that if her husband didn't bring Pepsi home, conflict ensued.

We next visited A sgang's youngest son, whose wife held her

⁸⁰ See a photo of a comparable milk hook at <https://bit.ly/2VPuKbs>, (accessed 7 March 2020).

grandchild while the daughter-in-law served milk tea. I only visited her once a year, so I didn't know much about her, but her husband and Father were close friends. She said that she had seen Brother and me go to A sgang's home a few minutes earlier, which made me glad that we had visited. Since they had seen us, it would have been a grave mistake if we had not visited.

Finally, we reached A pa lo's home. None of their family knew we were coming until we entered their guest room, where Grandfather was chatting with guests. His youngest son and wife were also there. They all stood upon our arrival and warmly greeted us. I presented Grandfather my *rgyal bo* with a *kha btags* and fifty RMB. Brother didn't give anything because he had visited with Mother on the first day of Lo sar.

I asked about Grandfather's health and current situation. He was very fond of me because I enjoyed listening to his life experiences.⁸¹ I also shared recent news, for instance, the weddings I had attended. Grandfather asked about the marriage that Brother and I had participated in the day before. Before I finished describing how elaborate the wedding was, Grandfather's youngest son, Gnam lha mkhar, commented that he didn't like the wedding because there was no liquor.

Some young male relatives arrived while we were having a good conversation. Gnam lha mkhar and the guests started drinking, filling the room with the odor of liquor and loud laughter. Grandfather said he would rest, so I couldn't chat with him any longer.

The young male guests continued drinking and talking. We recounted whatever we remembered and thought was humorous. We talked about horseracing, who owned the best horse in our community, the price of horses, and so on. Once our conversation moved to Grandfather, Gnam lha mkhar observed that he hadn't yet celebrated his ninetieth birthday.

Locals usually celebrate elders on their eightieth or ninetieth birthday, though very few live that long. According to the local calendar, Grandfather was ninety in 2018. Though he didn't want a

⁸¹ See Klu thar rgyal et al. (2020) for more on my maternal grandfather's life experiences.

celebration, locals came with cash gifts he planned to use to invite monks to chant for his family and tribe.

FIG 69. Rgya mtsho (left) and his wife, my maternal grandmother's sister, Lcags mo byams (right), sit and chant on the *hu tse* in their family's cooking, sleeping, and eating room.



THE FIFTH DAY OF THE FIRST LUNAR MONTH (20 FEBRUARY 2018)

Today was a very auspicious day with many weddings. Brother and I needed to attend two.

Brother and I shared a *hu tse* in A pa lo's guest room with a cousin. Gnam lha mkhar woke us at five AM wearing his new robe and seemed intoxicated. Thinking we were late, we immediately jumped up.

The family didn't hold a hair-combing speech for the bride, reasoning it was unnecessary because it was her second marriage. We reached the home and found men sitting and chatting while women had just finished plaiting the bride's hair into small braids and were busy dressing her. Local guests continued to arrive. Most were men in their forties and fifties. Some were half-drunk from the night before. I admired them for getting up so early and attending the wedding.

Dkon mchog rgya mtsho, one of A sgang's sons, was Father's friend. He was a monk in childhood and adolescence and later became a layman. Locals hadn't liked him much because of this and also because he made money by buying livestock from locals and selling them to Muslim merchants in the township town. Over time, the locals' attitude changed. He had become the wealthiest man in my home community in the last couple of years. He and his siblings controlled the livestock market in the township town, hired employees from my home community, and financially supported some impoverished local families. They now called him Laoban Rgya mtsho 'Boss Rgya mtsho'. I saw him at all the weddings I attended in my home community. Sometimes he attended with his son. He never missed a wedding.

He had gone to the suicide victim's home the previous night, chanted and spun ma Ni wheels with others, and then participated in the wedding in the early morning. He said he hadn't closed his eyes all night. I was impressed by how much he valued family ties.

The guest room brimmed with men's laughter. Suddenly a woman shouted, "The groom and his escorts are coming!"

Everyone rushed outside, surprised that the groom and his entourage had arrived early. A car with bright lights was moving slowly along the foot of the mountain. Some men ran forward and greeted the

escorts, who got out of the car, flung liquor into the sky, and prayed loudly. The groom's escorts got back into the car and slowly followed the local men. As they drew near the groom's house, they received a long white cloth from two local men as described earlier.

There was only one car for the groom, two elders, and two young men. It was six AM and still dark, making it difficult to discern the escorts' faces.

About thirty minutes later, I was helping the family carry a pack of red tea beverages into the home when A pa lo arrived with a boy. His home was only about one hundred meters from where the wedding was held. I greeted him and tried to hold his arm, fearing he might fall in the dark. He said, "I don't need help! Let go!"

Everyone stood in surprise as A pa lo very energetically entered the guest room. Most had not realized he was so energetic. The wedding was considered more auspicious as ninety-year-old Grandfather sat and chatted with the groom's elder escorts.

The groom's two young escorts were soon invited into the glass-enclosed porch and started singing love songs with local women. It was before sunrise, and everyone could hear the love songs. The men initially felt uncomfortable, and the women dared not enter the guest room. As the sound of elders in conversation and laughter grew louder, most men moved near the elders to listen. Some men listened to the love songs from the glass-enclosed porch. Others gossiped about the two young male singers, where they had seen them, how well they sang, when and where women had defeated them by singing love songs, and so on.

Tshe ring rdo rje is in his late forties, lives in my home community, does the same business as Boss Rgya mtsho, has an excellent voice for singing traditional songs, and has performed at almost every local traditional wedding. He was very confident this morning and somewhat intoxicated. He continued singing to the two elder escorts from the groom's side and A pa lo. Other local young singers behaved differently. They had to be urged to sing and pushed in front of the crowd, or they would not sing.

Suddenly, Tshe ring rdo rje sang a love song to the groom's oldest escort, who was in his late seventies, sitting on the *hu tse*, and

chatting with local elders. The elder escort responded with a love song. Though he didn't have a clear voice due to his age, we had never heard the lyrics before. This attracted attention, and local men gathered near the elders again.

At around eight AM, the groom and his escorts departed after having a bowl of soup dumplings but not before the bride's side presented different pieces of cloth with cash. A local man gave a *ske rags bcng pa* 'tying sash' speech while tying a new colorful sash around the groom's waist, who stood while listening to the speech. The speaker announced the amount of money and cloth received from the bride's side to the groom. The bride's family gave *kha btags* with fifty RMB to each of the groom's escorts. A wedding's quality was judged on how much money the family gifted the groom's or bride's escorts. The community had made a rule that the amount could not exceed one hundred RMB per escort.

As soon as the groom and his escorts left, all the local guests were served dumplings in soup. Afterward, the bride's side arranged the three best local cars for the bride and her escorts to go to the groom's home. Brother and I were told that one of us should be a bride's escort and go to the groom's house because the bride and my family were close relatives. I explained that Brother and I needed to participate in another wedding, plus I couldn't sing love songs, so it was better if someone who sang well went instead of us. The family agreed.

There were fourteen escorts for the bride. One of the bride's uncles stood at the entrance as she came out of her home, called her name, and loudly intoned, "*Skyid cig yod na rang gis khyer, g.yang zhig yod na a mar zhog* 'Please take all well-being with you; please leave all good fortune for your mother'."

The bride got in the car as her mother and female relatives wailed. Brother and I returned to A pa lo's home after the cars with the bride's escorts left.

Our maternal grandfather had just returned home and was planning to drive the sheep to the fenced pasture near his family's house while the rest of the family busily helped the wedding family. Grandfather wanted us to wait until his daughter-in-law returned on

the grounds it wasn't proper if we left without taking Lo sar gifts. I helped him drive the sheep to the fenced pasture. The daughter-in-law appeared, rushed to the house, and soon emerged with several packs of candy, a pack of white sugar, and a plastic bag of raisins. Brother and I resisted but finally accepted a small plastic bag of white sugar. As we were leaving, A pa lo asked me to come back one night to chat before I returned to Xi'an, and I promised I would.

Brother and I needed to join the next wedding in the township town held by a family from my home community. Their son was marrying a Chinese woman. After saying goodbye to A pa lo, we reached the township town in forty minutes with Brother driving. The wedding was in the Dzam b+ha lha 'Deity of Wealth' Restaurant run by a local Tibetan that had opened in about 2015. It was full of people when we arrived. A table at the restaurant entrance was surrounded by people handing money to a male relative of the wedding family. He busily recorded names and the amount they gave. I presented 150 RMB and gave Father's name after about five minutes. The man checked the money, wrote my community's name, and recorded Father's name.

As Brother and I looked for seats, another two of the groom's male relatives came and escorted Brother to a seat. I noticed some participants were looking into a room through the restaurant door. Curious, I went over and discovered a big table surrounded by the bride with her parents and some relatives, who were all Chinese and considered her escorts. They wore ill-fitting Tibetan robes and were with the groom, his parents, and some of their close relatives. Locals stared at the Chinese bride and her escorts. Communication between the groom's and bride's sides was challenging because of language differences, so there wasn't much conversation and only a few jokes, but they toasted each other frequently.

Brother and I were seated at different tables in different compartments. Fortunately, one of my cousins was at the table where I was sitting. There were many guests, all of whom were locals. The restaurant was too small to seat everyone, though it was the second-largest restaurant in my township and had two floors. Consequently, the groom's family led twenty guests to another nearby restaurant.

After *ganguo tudoupian* 'dry pot potato chips' was served, we

waited thirty minutes for the next dish. I shared a table with twelve young men, most of whom I didn't know. Through the conversation, I learned two sang modern Tibetan songs well. One had just come from Zi ling, where he regularly sang at a Tibetan bar. He frequently and ostentatiously answered his phone, announcing he needed to participate in another wedding soon. Local young men were attracted by his iPhone X, his life in Zi ling, and his description of the best bars in Zi ling. We picked up our chopsticks again when the next dish came to our table. Our common conversation topic was the most expensive cars we had seen during Lo sar. The young men complained about this "undeveloped" township town when new dishes didn't appear on our tables for a while.

The two singers were soon invited to the stage. Local guests stood everywhere in the restaurant, including the corridor, making it hard to see the singers on the stage, so we returned to the table and waited for our next dish while fiddling with our smartphones.

All the men headed outside after a while, so I joined them. The bride's escorts were leaving, and some locals came out of the restaurant and accompanied them. After they left, the men returned to the restaurant. Six dishes had been served to all the tables, and I guessed five more were coming.⁸²

Brother and I decided to go home. It was the most boring wedding I have ever attended.

⁸² Six dishes were offered before Brother and I left for home: *ganguo tudoupian* 'dry pot potato chips', *shousi baocai* 'hand-shredded cabbage', *zhuti* 'braised pork leg', *shouzhua yangrou* 'hand-grasp mutton' ('chunks of boiled mutton'), *yangrou baozi* 'mutton-stuffed steamed dumplings', and *hupi lazi* 'tigerskin chili peppers'.

FIG 70. The bride's side with gifts for each of the groom's escorts. As the groom and his escorts were leaving, the bride's side presented the pieces of cloth and cash to the bride's companions (Dpal rgyal).



FIG 71. The bride's grandfather, A tho (left), and another elder discuss the arrangement of cars and the number of male escorts to accompany the bride to the groom's home.



FIGS 72, 73. Bsod nam (FIG 72, left) and Bsod nam skyid (FIGS 73, right) are my maternal relatives. Both attended the wedding. Bsod nam is locally known as a gifted singer and performed love songs with one of the groom's escorts at the wedding in the morning.



FIG 74. The singer offers a contemporary Tibetan song at this restaurant's wedding party.



FIG 75. Men and women sit at different tables in the restaurant.



THE SIXTH DAY OF THE FIRST LUNAR MONTH (21 FEBRUARY 2018)

Gnam mtsho was in her early forties, and from an agricultural area in Khri ka. She had visited Ma ma the previous day and spent the night with her.

Before Ma ma married A pa lo lon, she had given birth to a daughter, who later gave birth to Gnam mtsho. Ma ma adopted this grandchild after Gnam mtsho's mother's death. A pa lo lon and Ma ma eventually arranged Gnam mtsho's marriage to a man in Khri ka, so she only visited A pa lo lon and Ma ma during Lo sar.

Father was going to the suicide victim's home to chant *ma Ni*. Father suggested fifty RMB and a new robe when Mother asked what kind of Lo sar gift she should give Gnam mtsho. Mother thought it was too much because Gnam mtsho hadn't visited my family the previous year for Lo sar but had visited A dga's family and other relatives. Mother was still unhappy about that.

After preparing meat and dumplings in soup around noon, Mother told me to invite Gnam mtsho and Ma ma to Room 4. They were chatting, and Gga' skyid lha mo was watching TV when I invited them. Gnam mtsho returned with me after we chatted for a while. Ma ma said she would come later when the wind calmed.

Mother came out to greet Gnam mtsho and led the way to Room 4, where they chatted, ate together, and soon moved to Room 1, where Gnam mtsho began washing her hair. She explained that she had been home in Khri ka the day before when she learned a neighbor was driving to our township town. She hurriedly packed everything and left in the car without washing her hair. They continued their enjoyable chatting as Gnam mtsho washed and combed her hair. She was planning to visit other close relatives since this was her only chance to visit in a year.

Mother and Gnam mthso discussed each of their family's situations. Gnam mtsho mostly talked about her children and their school life. She added that she was passionate about using WeChat from the beginning and that every woman in her village used it. Most village women didn't sleep until after midnight because WeChat so

absorbed them. Mother and Gnam mtsho agreed that they were tired of WeChat but acknowledged they had been able to access a lot of positive information from the many WeChat groups. Some group chats were devoted to singing traditional Tibetan songs. Mother and Gnam mtsho thought an advantage of WeChat was listening while doing their home chores. Another attraction was joining group chats for close relatives and learning each other's latest news.

Late that afternoon, Mother gave Gnam mtsho the new robe and fifty RMB before she returned to Ma ma's home.

A red car arrived at Ma ma's home that same afternoon. Mother told us to get ready, tidy our rooms, and heat a kettle of tea. She assumed the guest would visit our family too, but later, the car left, disappointing Mother. Every local woman feels the same if a guest visits neighbors and doesn't visit her family. This is especially true during Lo sar, so my parents emphasized that when Brother and I visited a family during Lo sar, we should also visit their neighbors.

The afternoon was windy. Brother gestured to a lot of smoke to the west, far from our home. We assumed a family's house or pasture was on fire, and we rushed to the hilltop behind our house but could only see smoke.

Father returned later that afternoon and reported the smoke was from burning pastures in an enormous valley where many farmers lived. A strong wind had set a nearby pasture on fire after a woman had climbed to the west edge of the valley and offered incense. Some locals later extinguished the fire after a huge amount of pasture was burned. Father warned Mother to be very careful with fire and never offer incense on a windy day and left to report to Ma ma.

Father had more news. The *lab tse* on Bal bo Mountain, one of the biggest *lab tse* in our area, had caught on fire on the first day of Lo sar. Fireworks had started the fire, though no one knew who was responsible. The burning *lab tse* was too fierce for locals to extinguish and had been burning for several days. Locals just let it burn.

In the summer of 2017, Father had bought three brightly painted wooden arrows about one meter long from a store in the township town and asked Bshad sgrub to purify them by chanting. He had planned to offer incense on Bal bo Mountain and add the three

arrows to the *lab tse* during Lo sar. The seventh and eighth days of Lo sar are considered inauspicious, and locals do not visit. There are usually no local activities and no guests. Father had told Brother and me to offer incense on Bal bo and A ma lcam mountains. News of the burning *lab tse* changed his mind. I told Father that though the *lab tse* had burned, we could still offer incense because the deity was still there. He disagreed and said that locals were planning to invite a great *bla ma* and rebuild the *lab tse* in the summer, so he would not offer incense on Bal bo Mountain.

Father also described his day at the home of the suicide victim, where he had gone to chant *ma Ni* in the morning. There had been many local helpers, and the deceased's computer, camera, and guitar were given to a *bla ma*. The deceased family had invited eight monks to chant and *bdun btsugs* 'hold rituals for seven days'. The monks claimed they had completed the ritual after about two hours. Locals were surprised, commenting that everything was becoming more efficient and convenient these days, including chanting and rituals.

THE SEVENTH DAY OF THE FIRST LUNAR MONTH (22 FEBRUARY 2018)

When I was a child, A pa lo lon enjoyed showing his rifle to two of my cousins from an agricultural area in Khri ka. They loved toting the rifle and marching back and forth in front of our paternal grandparents. Every year, when they visited A pa lo lon and Ma ma for Lo sar, they played with A pa lo lon's rifle and vividly described this experience to their peers and neighbors when they returned home.

One year, on the eighth day of Lo sar, the younger cousin accidentally pulled the trigger, the rifle fired, and a bullet shattered a windowpane, terrifying everyone. A pa lo lon angrily scolded, "Who told you to visit on such an inauspicious day? You should come before or after these two inauspicious days!"

Their game of carrying the rifle thus ended, and my two cousins never again visited on these two days.

Today was one of the two inauspicious days to visit other families during Lo sar, but Father thought it was a great day to start work. He wanted to lay a long plastic pipe again between the nearest new public tap water source and our home.

The local government and the Friendship Charity Association built a new tap water source near my home in 2009.⁸³ It was about one kilometer by road and a half kilometer through fenced pastures from our house. A family camped there in autumn used this tap water; in other seasons, only my family used this water source.

Families living in Rdo ser gained access to about seven new public tap-water sources in the same year, with three or four families sharing one tap. However, the new water sources were far from the homes, the water frequently froze in winter, and some locals still needed to water their livestock at the old public tap-water source.

The weather was warming, so Father thought spring would come soon. My family had laid the plastic pipe the previous year but had stored it in late autumn, fearing it would freeze and burst in winter.

Until I was about nineteen, Mother had saved rainwater to wash our thick robes and carpets at home. Whenever a storm blew in

⁸³ See more at <https://bit.ly/2TN3rxf>, (accessed 20 January 2020).

from the northwest, she hurriedly ran to the pile of dry yak dung near our house and covered it with plastic. She also told me to collect dry cheese on another piece of plastic with its edges held down by pebbles to prevent wind from turning it over. She would rush inside our house, take containers such as vats, plastic buckets, and basins, and place them under the rainwater gutter of the roof. By this time, the rain had drenched her hair and upper robe. We would take our livestock to the many small pools on the road to drink for several days after the storm. Other locals did the same.

About thirty families shared a running water source, which was about two kilometers from my family's house. My family watered livestock every other day at the winter pasture. We transported water in a huge rusty iron container on a cart pulled by a donkey. Every winter holiday, I led the donkey to our house and hobbled its front legs with its halter. Mother or Brother would help load the metal container onto the cart. I set off after hitching the donkey to the cart and enjoyed fetching water partly because I could sit on the cart as the donkey pulled it. I again hobbled the donkey when I got to the water source and filled the container, which took about an hour.

Each time I returned, Mother would ask about who I had met, what I had said, what they had said, what clothes they wore, and so on. Tired of her questions, I would answer critically, "Why not ask me something interesting or useful?"

I didn't realize then that such information was important to her. Most local women chat with those who water livestock for their families. My parents never asked me to water our sheep because there are too many for me to recognize when some joined another flock. Mother preferred that she or Brother water my family's sheep, which took two or three hours. When it was her turn to water the sheep, she wore her cleanest clothes in anticipation of meeting her female friends who had come to water their livestock or to fetch water.

Most families now own a concrete water tank, including my family. It is next to our house. We stored water in it by transporting water from our old tap water source with a three-wheeler. Ten three-wheeler trips and one to two days were required to fill the tank. Father did the water transporting and usually went to the old tap water source

in the late afternoon. No one watered livestock then, so Father connected his pipe to the tap, and while he waited, he visited Pad+ma yag's home, which was the nearest household. He chatted with Pad+ma yag, and sometimes had dinner there.

In 2016-2017, my family transported clean water with a motorcycle. In the winter, we watered the livestock from my family's tank. Winter is lambing time, and it is good if the sheep don't make long trips for water. Locals transported clean water using a motorcycle for drinking or cooking from the old tap water source. In 2017, some hauled water in their family vehicle.

In the summer of 2017, Father and A pa lo lon bought about 500 meters of plastic water pipe to have water near our houses once we connected the tube to the nearest tap water source.

Today was a sunny day, so Father decided to connect the pipe. Father, Brother, Sister, and I spent about three hours unrolling the pipe and connecting it to the nearest tap water source. It took about three hours to finish. My family and grandparents now had water in front of our houses. My family filled our concrete tank, which made us feel more secure.

THE EIGHTH DAY OF THE FIRST LUNAR MONTH (23 FEBRUARY 2018)

We discovered this morning that the water in the pipe had frozen. My parents commented that the ice in the pipe probably wouldn't melt until spring. Yesterday's efforts had been in vain.

Father planned to stop at A dga's home on his way to the township town and present a pack of biscuits and 500 RMB to Glang sgron skyid, A dga's older daughter, who had just returned to her parents' home from her husband's home with her first baby, who was now several months old. Her father had arranged the marriage about two years earlier.

A pa lo lon had phoned Father the night before and said he wanted to come home from the township town after learning that his granddaughter, Glang sgron skyid, had returned with her baby. A pa lo lon had remained at his heated, government-provided apartment in the township town after visiting his son-in-law in Zi ling.

Today, Mother only ate lunch, a practice she followed on the first, eighth, fifteenth, and twenty-ninth days of every lunar month. On such days, Mother wore no ornaments, such as coral necklaces or gold or silver earrings, and unrolled and slept on a carpet on the floor. She followed this rule after the *bla ma* she most respected gave such teachings.

At around one PM, Mother started her meal after preparing a *rtsam sgam 'rstam pa* container', *zho ze'u* 'yogurt bucket', an apple, a slice of *thud*, fried bread, and a small kettle of milk tea. She enjoyed her meal after removing her shoes and sitting on a folded carpet near the stove in Room 1. She never relaxed before ensuring the livestock were grazing, the lambs were safe from predators, and the watchdog had been fed. Today was the same. After finishing her home chores, she chanted and prayed in Room 2 and checked the livestock again. Finally, she sat down and had a meal. She was in an excellent mood and chatted with us. After an hour, she told me she would stand, so I brought some water in a ladle. She sipped a little, wet her head after I poured some drops into her right palm, and stood up.

Later, Mother told me that her feet were cold and painful. She

brought a brick and put it near the stove to heat. I suggested I heat some water to warm her feet, but she explained she preferred using a brick because the water would be wasted. Later, she put her feet on the warm brick.

Father returned home with A pa lo lon. I put my paternal grandparents' and my family's water containers in the trunk of Father's car and went to fetch water. Grandfather said that our families should dig a ditch and bury the water pipe because it was troublesome for my family to transport water for them, making my grandparents uncomfortable. I joked that Father went to the township town almost daily, so he could bring water on his way home without any trouble.

My family and paternal grandparents planned to bring tap water near my home, but it would cost more than 20,000 RMB. A fenced pasture lay between the current tap water and my paternal grandparents' house. We couldn't dig in another family's pasture and would have to dig around it.

THE NINTH DAY OF THE FIRST LUNAR MONTH (24 FEBRUARY 2018)

I learned that Uncle Klu skyabs rgyal was coming home from the provincial hospital at around two PM. Li thar rgyal had sent this message through WeChat. I told A pa lo lon because he had said he wanted to visit him again today.

A pa lo lon, Father, and I left for A dga's home around one PM. Grandfather gave 500 RMB to Glang sgron skyid, who had gained weight since I had last seen her when she married. Her dark skin had become lighter. She greeted us in a farmer's accent. A few days earlier, I had learned from Mother and Ma ma's conversation that they were impressed because Glang sgron skyid had not been expected to do any home chores while she was pregnant.

We were playmates before I started attending school. She never attended school. After learning songs by listening to singers at local weddings, she would sing while herding her family's livestock. She had an amazing voice.

When Father asked if there was anything we could do to help, A dga' replied that they would make *thud* as an additional gift for Glang sgron skyid's departure. A dga' and his wife were expecting Aunt Stag mo mtsho to come and make it that night. Aunt Stag mo mtsho's home is very near A dga's, and she makes excellent *thud*.

Glang sgron skyid and her infant would leave for her husband's home the next morning, so *thud* would be presented to her husband's home the next day. A dga' received 4,000 RMB from his relatives for his daughter, who had come home with her first baby. It was customary to give property to a daughter when she visited her parents with her firstborn from her husband's home, so A dga' also decided to give twenty-five sheep to his daughter's new family.

A pa lo lon, Father, and I headed to Aunt Stag mo mtsho's house after chatting for a while. A dga' said that he would soon join us.

We arrived at two PM and found Aunt Stag mo mtsho and her daughter at home. I saw platters of various food on a short-legged table in the center of the *hu tse*, which I had not seen when I visited her on the second day of Lo sar.

Aunt Stag mo mtsho was happy about her husband's return. I was impressed with how central a father is to a family. Today was Lo sar for Aunt Stag mo mtsho's family. After serving tea, Aunt Stag mo mtsho and her daughter continued making dumplings on a wooden board. I rolled up my sleeves, said I wanted to help, and joined them after washing my hands, although I didn't do much except make dough wrappers.

A pa lo lon, Father, and Aunt Stag mo mtsho started chatting, making our work more enjoyable. After about thirty minutes, Uncle Klu skyabs rgyal and his oldest son hadn't arrived, so we phoned the oldest son, who had accompanied his father in the hospital. He said they had just left Zi ling and wouldn't be home until five or six PM, which meant Aunt Stag mo mtsho would be unable to help A dga' make *thud*. Father suggested that he go home and bring Ma ma, Mother, and Brother to A dga's home. Ma ma and Mother were good at making *thud*, and Brother could decorate them. A pa lo lon and Aunt Stag mo mtsho agreed, so Father left.

Aunt Stag mo mtsho had many dumplings to make, so we continued making them while A pa lo lon chatted with Aunt Stag mo mtsho.

Aunt Stag mo mtsho had been to Zi ling only once when A pa lo lon took her and Mother to Sku 'bum Monastery when they were teenagers. Thirty years later, Aunt Stag mo mtsho went to Zi ling again with her second son to visit her husband in the hospital, never imagining that her oldest son was attending school in such a polluted city. She stayed in the hospital for only one night and then returned home to do home chores and tend the livestock. She said she felt much better when she saw the blue sky in the countryside. Aunt Stag mo mtsho had many things to say about her trip to Zi ling. While on the bus to Zi ling, her second son asked her to lower her voice when talking to him. She hadn't realized that her voice was so loud.

She also described a local man who worked as a traffic policeman in our township town who had driven to Zi ling one day but later had been unable to find the way back home. He had inadvertently returned to his starting place after several minutes but managed to get out of Zi ling with help from a friend in the city.

Aunt Stag mo mtsho also expressed surprise at seeing and talking to her husband on a WeChat video call after he was hospitalized. She had been unaware of how rapidly the outside world was changing. She and her husband have been herders since childhood and owned the largest number of livestock in my home community. Their oldest son and daughter attended school, while the younger son remained at home helping the family. Aunt Stag mo mtsho often went to town on a motorcycle to visit my paternal grandparents, who were living in the room provided by the government. She often reached the township town at around noon with yak milk or yogurt, helped Ma ma wash and plait her hair into braids, and then returned home to do chores.

When A pa lo lon asked about the expense of medical treatment in Zi ling, Aunt Stag mo mtsho replied, "My oldest son took 40,000 RMB from home last time. It was around 90,000 RMB in total."

A pa lo lon and I were shocked. Grandfather said, "I want to donate something for the difficulties that your family has encountered. You must choose between 1,000 RMB or one of my five sheep from the sheep your family herds for me."

"Neither! We don't need your help. You have already done enough. I heard the government would return seventy percent of the medical expenses," Aunt Stag mo mtsho replied.

A pa lo lon insisted, "Your family must choose 1,000 RMB or one of the sheep."

Aunt Stag mo mtsho refused again.

"You must choose. If you don't take money, one of my sheep belongs to you from today. Otherwise, I won't visit your family again," Grandfather said.

A pa lo lon and Aunt Stag mo mtsho's conversation was interrupted by the sound of a motorcycle bringing two local young men, who were Aunt Stag mo mtsho's husband's relatives. After about thirty minutes, Father came with Ma ma, Mother, and Brother from making *thud* at A dga's home. Next, A dga' and my paternal uncles and aunts from my community arrived with their family members, one after another, after driving their livestock into their enclosures. They brought Lo sar gifts for Aunt Stag mo mtsho's husband. The house brimmed with guests.

At around six-twenty PM, Uncle Klu skyabs rgyal arrived in his family's small van with their oldest son and the driver, G.yang 'bum rgyal, who had a driver's license and could navigate Zi ling City streets. He had driven Aunt Stag mo mtsho family's van to Zi ling at around four-thirty AM to pick up Klu skyabs rgyal, his oldest son, and their luggage.

We all went outside to greet Uncle Klu skyabs rgyal, who was so thin that his clothes hung on his body. A pale complexion and a massive halo of white hair made him look completely different from the previous summer. Seeing patients return home from hospitalization was rare, and everyone was pleased. Most locals were too ill to be cured by the time they reached the provincial hospital. I saw how happy everyone was, especially Aunt Stag mo mtsho and her children. She just smiled. There were no hugs and no words.

Uncle Klu skyabs rgyal sat with the other men on the *hu tse*, the warmest place in the house. Others sat on carpets Brother had unrolled along the walls inside the house. Everyone was able to sit. Aunt Stag mo mtsho and Mother cooked meat and dumplings for everyone. Aunt's children and I helped serve the guests. The cottage became warmer under the dim light of the solar electricity generating system. Steam rose from the bowls of food, and there were many jokes and much laughter. One visitor joked to Klu skyabs rgyal, who spoke very slowly, "Your voice has also changed, but it's so beautiful!"

Ma ma sat quietly and happily, listening in a corner near the *hu tse*. Visitors from nine families that night and the happy atmosphere and conversation made it a wonderful gathering.

FIG 76. Aunt Stag mo mtsho and her daughter make dumplings on a wooden board for visitors.



FIG 77. Platters of food on a short-legged table in the center of the *hutse* at Aunt Stag mo mtsho's home.



FIG 78. Visitors listen to Uncle Klu skyabs rgyal describing his hospitalization.



THE TENTH DAY OF THE FIRST LUNAR MONTH (25 FEBRUARY 2018)

Mother and I got up very early and set off at around five AM. Mother had prepared everything the previous night for a pilgrimage to the Jo khang in Khri ka with pilgrims from Yangs dus, a nearby community about an hour by car from my home. I was going to assist her.

Mother had begun making pilgrimages to Sku 'bum Monastery after her mother passed away in 2008. She went with her female friends, most of whom were close relatives. One or two males often accompanied them to register in a hotel and communicate with others in their broken Chinese. Sometimes Father also went. He preferred shopping after worshiping at the main temple of Sku 'bum while Mother and her pilgrim group prostrated and circumambulated the monastery complex.

Mother and her fellow pilgrims planned to travel to Sku 'bum Monastery in a car that belonged to one of the members and stay near Sku 'bum after registering at a nearby hotel.

The pilgrim group got up at around four-thirty AM the following morning and began prostrating to and circumambulating the monastery, completing a circumambulation at around noon. Mother observed, "I was very uncomfortable when photographers appeared and took pictures of us. They moved back and forth around us, which made it hard for me to concentrate on what I was doing."

Another time, I saw her calculating with her fingers at home before explaining, "If I can live ten more years, I can go on pilgrimage to Sku 'bum ten more times."

"Mother, you can do more than that!" I replied, thinking she was only in her mid-forties and healthy. Maybe her strong belief in religion and the death of peers made her think death was unpredictable and always imminent, a reason she wishes to see me married and with children.

Mother has chanted Tara since I was a child, using her own melody. She chants every morning after getting up and making a fire in the stove. I better understood Mother's strong belief when she suggested that I chant daily in line with what Bshad sgrub directed.

She said one day, "You children should chant what Monk Bshad sgrub has instructed. When I was a child, a diviner told me to chant in daily life to avoid a disaster in my life. I ignored this, which is why your brother is deaf."

A few days earlier, Mother's cousins, Btsun thar skyid, had phoned and shared a plan for a community pilgrimage to the Jo khang in Khri ka. Mother wanted to seize this opportunity and asked Father, who agreed.

We set off in our car with incense, old clothes, thick gloves, and some Lo sar gifts. I drove, and Mother sat in the front seat by me. Our trip to Btsun thar skyid's home was delayed because Mother insisted I drive slowly. I was anxious about being late, but her melodic chanting calmed me.

After about an hour, we reached Btsun thar skyid's home just as they were having breakfast. The family rushed out and greeted us. After we presented our Lo sar gifts, we were ushered into their living room and offered tea. All of Btsun thar skyid's family members were going on pilgrimage, and we learned that locals would set off after the men had offered incense on the hilltop near Btsun thar skyid's home.

Mother asked about a ten-year-old girl, who was considered the incarnation of Mother's mother, born into Btsun thar skyid's husband's (Lcags byams rgyal) brother's family a year after my maternal grandmother had passed away. My maternal uncles and aunts had visited the child after a famous *bla ma* identified the incarnation. Over the past decade, Mother has sent gifts of cash and clothes to the little girl and talks about how cute she is and how she often comments, "I want to go home." Mother shows us the little girl's picture on her phone screen and shares her story, though none of my family members are very interested.

Lcags byams rgyal's brother and the little girl's father appeared while we were about to change our clothes for the pilgrimage. He invited Mother and me to his home. There was little time to visit, but he said it was just for a cup of tea and insisted, so we had no choice. Fortunately, Mother had prepared extra Lo sar gifts. Four or five women there had come a long way to join the pilgrimage. We presented our Lo sar gifts, and Mother added fifty RMB for the little girl, who was

too shy to come near us. We learned that she was also coming on the pilgrimage. Mother and I were treated as special guests and were served milk tea, fruit, fried bread, and cooked meat on different platters.

A woman sat near Mother and told her how lucky she was to have found her mother's incarnation, born as a human and in a family near where we lived and ended in sobs.

After about fifteen minutes of chatting and sipping tea, Mother and I got up, and all the family members and guests escorted us to their courtyard gate. The little girl's father gave one hundred RMB to me, a coat to Mother, and a bottle of liquor for Father as *Lo sar* gifts. They insisted no matter how we refused, so we took these gifts in embarrassment.

Lcags byams rgyal said, "All the men will offer incense on the hilltop. Did you bring enough incense to offer?"

"Yes, but can outsiders offer incense with locals?" I asked.

"Nobody will object," he replied.

I got in his car, and we went to the foot of the hill. Most of the men climbing the hill with white plastic bags of incense were strangers to me. Two local adult men were standing on the huge incense adobe altar on the hilltop. Lcags byams rgyal and I gave our bags of incense to those two men, who emptied them on the fire. After a few minutes, the men prayed and chanted loudly while flinging drops of sacred water on the altar and into the sky. We circumambulated the incense altar three times while some men blew conch horns.

After finishing three circumambulations, some men led us to the east side of the hill to a *mchod rten* 'stupa' where local men prostrated three times before leaving for home. I followed Lcags byams rgyal, who said that was the moment our pilgrimage started. We returned to his home. Mother and others had put on their old, thick pilgrimage clothes, and I also changed my clothes. Lcags byams rgyal had arranged a car for me to ride in while Mother would ride in his car. I had no driver's license, so we left my family's car at Btsun thar skyid's home, about fifty-five kilometers from the Jo kang in Khri ka. The plan was that the pilgrims would prostrate to the Jo khang. The fifty-five kilometers had been divided so each pilgrim would prostrate 200-300

meters that the pilgrimage managers had marked on the main road. Our driver dropped us off at the designated point on the way. After forty to fifty minutes, most pilgrims from our team had finished their prostrations.

The driver returned, picked us up, and we headed to the Jo khang in Khri ka. When we reached Kri ka County Town about an hour later, a man suggested we worship Yul lha Deity before going to the Jo khang. Everyone agreed, so our two cars headed to the Yul lha Deity Temple, where many Tibetans and Chinese were gathered. I met several pilgrim teams from Btsun thar skyid's home community. Some had come with children who would soon take college or senior middle school entrance examinations. Some women in our group from my home community had forgotten to change and were embarrassed after realizing they were still wearing old clothes.

Two altars stood in front of the temple. One was a big concrete altar filled with incense made of barley mixed with wheat flour and juniper, a few candies, and apples. Local herders, farmers, officials, merchants, and monks surrounded this altar. Goat flesh and fat burned on the other metal altar. A few men wearing suits, who looked like businessmen, were gathered there. A goat had just been sacrificed. Its head, legs, and other body parts were on the altar. An intense fire with thick smoke drew attention. Lcags byams rgyal explained that offering a living goat or fresh meat to Yul lha Deity was a very powerful offering, bringing immediate good fortune.

Mother handed me the incense bag we had brought. I tried to pour some on the altar, but there was already a big pile, so there was no place to offer what we had brought. The fire was very weak. I saw other worshipers pour their incense on the altar even though it fell to the ground from the altar, so I followed their example.

Next, we climbed a long, inclined staircase and reached the main room with the Yul lha Deity image. We entered after prostrating three times in front of the room and noticed three dried sheep carcasses in front of the Yul lha Deity image.⁸⁴ Other offerings included cash, good-quality silk cloth, and liquor. Mother offered one

⁸⁴ See Buffetrille (2019) for a description of offerings of goat and chickens at this temple.

rgyal bo, fried animal bread, and *rgyal bo dmar drus*. I offered a yellow *kha btags*. Mother also offered fried animal-bread and *rgyal bo dmar drus* during our worship of other deities in the temple.

After we finished, our car's driver had returned and was waiting in the car. He commented that many herdsmen's motorcycles had been stolen a few years earlier after they entered the temple to worship, so he had worried that his car might be stolen.

We soon set off for the Jo khang, about five kilometers away, and upon arriving, we saw the cars from Btsun thar skyid's community parked nearby. Some pilgrims were changing clothes. Our team members also took turns changing clothes in the cars. Women put on new robes and coral necklaces. Other teams were spinning *ma Ni* wheels while circumambulating temples in the Jo khang. Still others were prostrating in the temple.

After worshipping at the Jo khang, other pilgrim teams went to worship at the Yul lha Temple, while others went shopping in Khri ka County Town. It was afternoon by the time we finished worshipping, so most of our team members agreed to have lunch. The women, however, insisted on looking around Khri ka County Town and shopping since they could only come to Khri ka County Town once every several years. We finally agreed to have lunch and go home. We left after having a bowl of *garang mianpian* 'square noodles of Garang place' that were twelve RMB per bowl. Children chose other noodles such as *ganban* 'dry mixed noodles' for the same price.

Mother was planning to worship at Lha dkar bo Temple, about eight kilometers from the Jo khang, but didn't insist after realizing it was inconvenient. My parents appreciated Lha dkar bo Temple because they had yearned to have a daughter after my birth. Sister was born after they worshipped at Lha dkar bo.

After returning home, Mother reported that she had heard another pilgrim was going to Sku 'bum from the Jo khang and said she wanted to join her. Father objected because prostrating on the side of the main road was dangerous. A car could easily strike a pilgrim. Mother then gave up the idea of prostrating to Sku 'bum.

FIG 79. Two offering altars in front of the Yul lha Temple about six kilometers from the center of Khri ka County Town. Heavy smoke rises from the altar where meat has been offered. Incense is offered on the right altar.



THE ELEVENTH DAY OF THE FIRST LUNAR MONTH (26 FEBRUARY 2018)

Sister left this morning for an internship with a company in Zi ling. Her school would start ten days later. She had wanted to leave home at the beginning of Lo sar since she had visited only our paternal grandparents and did not participate in weddings. However, Mother insisted, so she stayed until today, watching television at home or spending time with our paternal grandparents. She helped Mother serve guests and sometimes cooked and cleaned. She could not engage the guests very well in conversation, which seemed true for most students from my home community.

Also, today, A pa lo lon returned to the township town. He wanted to stay there and wanted Ma ma and Cousin to accompany him, but Ma ma insisted on remaining in our community. None of my paternal uncles and aunts agreed with A pa lo lon. They all wanted Ma ma to stay home in the winter pasture near my home, where it was very convenient to visit and care for her.

A pa lo lon said, "I asked your Ma ma to go on a pilgrimage to Sku 'bum with your sister's assistance to avoid language and transportation challenges, but she prefers to stay at home."

"It's OK. I'm going to Klu tshang Monastery the day after tomorrow, so we can go together," I replied.

"She won't go there either, so I chose not to go on pilgrimage. It's uncomfortable when people ask about your Ma ma if she isn't with me," he said.

A pa lo lon once told me he liked staying in the township town because he could see many things, encounter many people, and hear all kinds of news. He was often not at home when I visited the township town because he visited other elders who sent their grandchildren to school in the morning and picked them up in the afternoon. This is what my paternal grandparents had done during the last seven years. Elders chatted for hours as they sat on the street sides.

Once, A pa lo told me that he would also spend time in the township town if his eyes were good enough to see the sights every day. In the last couple of years, buildings heated in winter were going up in

our township town, so many locals longed to stay there, though the humble rooms were only big enough to accommodate a couple.

A pa lo lon also told me that he wouldn't miss any of the subsidies from the local government if he stayed in the township town. He enjoyed talking about President Xi and the current policy and hoped President Xi would be president for a very long time.

A pa lo lon left, though he had heard his youngest daughter and her husband might visit over Lo sar. Father drove A pa lo lon and Sister to the township town, and I accompanied them because I wanted to meet a friend I hadn't seen for a half year.

Sister left for Zi ling by bus, and Father drove A pa lo lon to his apartment building, where his small, warm apartment was on the third floor. There were some trays of apples and candies A pa lo lon had prepared a few days earlier in case guests visited. Father went to meet his friends after resting in A pa lo lon's room, and I went to meet my friend from Chos tsha, a nearby community. Most people from his community had settled in our township town ten years earlier after the government built two-room houses with a yard for each family. He and I had known each other since we were in high school.

We met in the Chuanwei Xiaochao Restaurant. He had worked in our township's government offices as an assistant when I had met him a year earlier.

A Tibetan ran the restaurant where we ordered four dishes. My friend insisted on paying the bill of 110 RMB. Overall, we had a great two-hour conversation. It was my friend's second day in our township town after returning from being with his mother at Gyu lung Nunnery in Gser chen (Gonghe) County, chanting and circumambulating every day.

Last year, people from his community hadn't celebrated Lo sar until the fourth day of the New Year due to the death of the eleventh Mkhar sngon po. Though born in his community, he had spent most of his life in Inner Mongolia. My friend also didn't celebrate this year because his older sister had passed away from an illness four months earlier.

I learned that his family had rented their restaurant - 'Dod 'jo g.yang khyim 'Happy Auspicious Home' - to others, though the restaurant income was very good. He explained:

Operating a restaurant is a great way to make money but also a source of sin. My family eventually couldn't bear it when we bought a motorized three-wheeler⁸⁵ loaded with meat every day. We felt that buying a lot of meat every day increased our sins, especially when my sister passed away. Feeling guilty about running a restaurant and accumulating such sin, we rented the restaurant to someone else. We now feel better.

He had also quit his job as a government assistant. Older officers often asked young men to do their work, so he didn't feel free. He was planning to open a large copyshop in the county town, which he said could make money because monasteries needed to print scriptures.

When Father and I were about to leave that afternoon, I saw A pa lo lon sitting on a chair with a shop owner in the gentle sunshine. Holding a string of prayer beads in his right hand, he observed pedestrians, cars, and motorcycles. Father and I left for home after saying goodbye to him.

When we got home, I noticed a sack of potatoes and three baked loaves of bread, so I was sure guests from an agricultural area had visited. Sure enough, Mother said Btsun thar, who is from a farming area about two hours away by car, had visited. His family owned many sheep and goats that Btsun thar often herded on the mountains while his wife did village farm work.

Btsun thar had rented a part of my family's winter pasture for one year and had stayed at my home. We spent Lo sar together that year. His wife visited him frequently and sometimes stayed for a week or so. Mother and Btsun thar's wife became good friends. She baked bread and taught Mother how to make excellent steamed dumplings. In return, Btsun thar's wife learned to make excellent yogurt and milk tea. Mother appreciated the delicious baked bread, and Btsun thar's

⁸⁵ See a picture of this smaller three-wheeler at <https://binged.it/2KgDiRd>, (accessed 30 July 2019).

wife admired Mother's yogurt and buttermilk. They exchanged work experiences and skills.

Sometimes Mother gave Father several bottles of buttermilk to take to Btsun thar's father's home in our township town. Btsun thar's family would pick them up when they came to the township town. In return, Mother received potatoes from Btsun thar's family. Mother loved potatoes and made various dishes with them.

My family cultivated a few potatoes in our old livestock pen near our house one year. The results were so good that we planted a whole bag of potatoes the following year. However, in late summer, we harvested only a half bag of potatoes, most of which were as small as my thumb, so we stopped cultivating potatoes.

Mother sincerely appreciated and often mentioned gifts of milk from neighbors and potatoes from agricultural areas and tried to reciprocate.

An elderly couple with no biological children lived about a kilometer from our house. The husband sat on an adobe bed while his wife sat on a wooden bed. They talked loudly to each other whenever I visited. The old woman sent her daughter-in-law with milk to our home when she knew Mother's milk cows had stopped giving milk at breeding time and remembered the days Mother would fast. Mother felt very grateful when she received yak milk from the old woman when her own milk cows had gone dry. Mother continued talking about this elderly couple after they passed away in the same season in 2015.

THE TWELFTH DAY OF THE FIRST LUNAR MONTH (27 FEBRUARY 2018)

Mother kept asking when I would bring a girl to my home like other young men in our community. News spread through the community whenever a young man brought a girl to his family's home. A few days earlier, Mother had heard of young men getting married just after finishing college. Their wives were from various places and had well-paid jobs. Mother knew details from local women and her female relatives through phone calls, WeChat, and Father. Mother said if I didn't bring a wife home, my family would find one for me, but this wasn't the first time Mother had said this, so I didn't worry.

While I was having breakfast, Father returned from feeding sheep about the same time Mother came back from milking. We had tea together. Mother suggested again that I bring a girl home by summer and reminded me that I should marry while my paternal grandparents and maternal grandfather were all still living. Father then mentioned two marriages that he had heard about from others:

A young man brought his girlfriend to his home. They both have official jobs and have known each other since they were in college. When the girl visited her boyfriend's home, the boy's family sent representatives with gifts to the girl's parents' home. They promised to give 500,000 RMB to the girl's family if they allowed the girl to stay at the boy's parents' home after the marriage. The girl's parents replied that their family would pay 500,000 RMB to the boy if his family agreed to allow him to stay at the girl's parents' home, so the engagement failed.

The second story was about the marriage of one of my primary schoolmates, who had not found a job three years after finishing college, but he did find a girlfriend with a well-paid job as a policewoman in a nearby county. Mother thought he had been very successful. Locals commented favorably on their marriage. Both sets of parents didn't want their child to move to the other's parent-in-law's home after marriage. Both sets of parents become responsible for caring for a new couple that does not live with their parents. However,

Father thought the young man was a loser because he couldn't get his wife to stay at his parents' home.

Both families agreed to celebrate with just one wedding party, which differs from the local custom of two wedding parties - one at the bride's home and a second at the groom's home. The wedding was held in the girl's county town. The boy's parents and close relatives didn't permit the girl's side to give a sash-tying speech to the groom on the wedding day. The bride's side commonly gave gifts worth as much as they could afford just after this speech. The groom's side needed to return gifts when the bride went to the groom's family. Both sides would compete, trying to outdo the other, which is why my primary schoolmate's side didn't give permission, understanding they would lose due to the bride's family's wealth. The bride's side gave a car worth about 150,000 RMB on the wedding day. Locals said the groom's side got a very good vehicle for free since they had avoided competition. Because of this, the boy didn't bring his wife to his home and live with his parents.

I understood Father was communicating what was best and what I should do when I married.

Father went to the township town as usual. Mother asked me to send a WeChat audio message to Father to learn if he would come home for supper. I was reluctant because Mother asked me to do this every time Father didn't return in the early afternoon, so I just said he would return soon.

Mother went outside to do her chores. When she returned, she again asked me to contact Father. I replied as before, but I soon tried to send a WeChat audio message to Father.

Father has enjoyed going to the township town since I was a child. Brother and I often played on a hilltop, waiting for his return while tending my family's livestock. Mother had a way of using sheep dung to divine Father's return.⁸⁶ She also used "bird bread" for

⁸⁶ Historically known as *bya pho drug mo drug* 'six male birds and six female birds' in our home community, it requires six pieces of sheep dung pellets. Mother often uses two piece of sheep dung pellets, which involves cutting two sheep dung pellets into two pieces. One side of the pellet pieces is considered male, and the other side female. Mother holds the pieces in her left hand after shaking them in her right hand, while praying to Yul lha

divination.⁸⁷

Mobile phones came to my home community in about 2006 and made life more convenient for my parents. Mother could call Father and ask the details of his return and prepare supper accordingly. WeChat provided even more convenience in about 2017. Once you have a smartphone, you can download the WeChat app.

Mother checked her phone hanging from the window in Room 1 and found a WeChat audio message from Father, who said he was coming with Youngest Aunt (Phyug mo skyid), her husband, and their children. Mother cleaned Room 4, lit a fire in the stove to warm the room, and started planning what she would cook.

Father hadn't returned by six PM, so Mother told me to send another WeChat audio message to Father, which I reluctantly did. Father replied he had just met Phyug mo skyid and her family in the township town and said they would be setting out soon. I reported to Ma ma what I had just heard.

Father arrived at Ma ma's home with Aunt Phyug mo skyid, her husband, and their children at around seven.

My paternal grandparents' house was near our community primary school when I was a child. It had two grades and was about ten kilometers from my family's home. I stayed with my grandparents at night while I was attending school. My grandparents liked chanting after supper, and Aunt Phyug mo skyid and I participated.

I enjoyed sleeping with Youngest Aunt because she was a great storyteller and would tell me vivid folktales every night. Although illiterate, she was a gifted singer. She learned love songs from a cassette recorder. Whenever A pa lo lon was absent for a while, Youngest Aunt took his radio tape player, which he used to listen to the radio. She would tell me to prepare a notebook and pencil when she

Deity and chanting. She repeats this process three times and interprets according to the orientation of the pieces of sheep dung in her left palm.

⁸⁷ *Byi'u mo* 'sparrow divination' is made from wheat flour mixed with water, fashioned in the shape of a bird, and put in the ash of a yak-dung fire. The bird-bread is the size of a sparrow. Mother prays to Yul lha Deity and chants while placing the dough in the ash. When the bird-bread is about ready, Mother removes it from the ash and examines the cracks. When cracks run from the bottom to the ear, it means there is hope.

was about to insert a cassette into the tape deck. After hearing a line of a love song, she would press the pause button and repeat it until I wrote out the sounds of what I had heard. Though I had no idea what these lines meant (I was a primary school student, and my written Tibetan was limited), I could write the sounds of each line. This was how she learned love songs. Thanks to her remarkable memory, I only needed to repeat the song a few times before she memorized it.

I didn't understand any of the love songs. However, a young teacher at the school often gave me a paper with a love song written on it that I gave Youngest Aunt and read to her as soon as my grandparents went outside. Youngest Aunt asked me to write a love song on paper after listening to a cassette, and I would give this to the young teacher the next day. He responded by writing another love song for Youngest Aunt.

At that time, my aunts and Ma ma liked to gather and chat over a kettle of strong milk tea. Ma ma and my older aunts would seize this opportunity to teach the younger aunts love songs and how to walk and perform love songs with a male singer in public.

Later, I attended a school in Khri ka County Town. My grandparents arranged Phyug mo skyid's marriage to a local young man. The new couple lived with A pa lo lon and Ma ma. He was well-behaved initially but left after Youngest Aunt gave birth to a daughter, Dga' skyid lha mo. A year later, my grandparents arranged her marriage to another young man from a nearby community. Youngest Aunt went to live in her husband's home while Dga' skyid lha mo remained with my grandparents.

A year later, Youngest Aunt returned home. She was pregnant and unable to bear the hard work in her new husband's home. Besides, her new husband's brother had mental problems and was a constant source of trouble.

In about 2015, A pa lo lon arranged a third marriage for Youngest Aunt to a man from an agricultural area in Khri ka. Her new husband's father was well-known and one of the wealthiest families in the Stong che area. His family was very fond of her because she capably herded their 500 sheep.

When Ma ma asked why they were so late, Aunt Phyug mo

skyid and her husband said they had set out as soon as they had driven their sheep into the sheep pen and added that they had to leave early the next morning to herd the sheep.

After about an hour, Aunt Phyug mo skyid's husband came to my home with Lo sar gifts and their children from Ma ma's house. Mother served the food she had prepared, and Father talked with Aunt Phyug mo skyid's husband in Room 4. Later, their children returned to Ma ma's house, where Aunt Phyug mo skyid was chatting with Ma ma.

At around nine, I escorted Aunt Phyug mo skyid's husband to Ma ma's home, where I saw Ma ma and Aunt Phyug mo skyid chatting as the children quietly watched a movie on a smartphone.

THE THIRTEENTH DAY OF THE FIRST LUNAR MONTH (28 FEBRUARY 2018)

Last night, Mother and Father had disagreed over *srung rtags 'dogs pa* which, for our family, is attaching a new protective symbol - a piece of cloth (see FIG 80) - to a sheep by sewing the cloth into the sheep's wool with thread. My family does this annually, believing it prevents misfortune and brings good fortune to my family's livestock. Mother insisted that we do it on the thirteenth day as usual, while Father said we needed to visit Klu tshang Monastery in the early morning because we had already planned to do that. Father thought we could renew the protective symbol on the fifteenth, which was also considered auspicious.

My parents woke Brother and me up early in the morning, saying we should prepare to go to Klu tshang Monastery, and then we went to Enclosure 1. I followed. Father entered the enclosure holding a piece of blue cloth in his right hand and a ladle of clean water in his left. Mother held a ladle of milky-water in one hand and a ladle of smoldering livestock dung in the other.

"Point it out to me, and I'll catch it for you," I said to Father as I entered the sheep pen,

"You catch it! Klu kho will exhaust the sheep if he can't catch it immediately," Mother said to Father.

The sheep were wild and could jump over your shoulder while you were at the sheep-pen entrance trying to stop them from slipping outside. Most had sharp, twisted horns. When I was a child, I was very good at catching sheep, especially during shearing time in the early summer. My peers and I competed in catching sheep, but I hadn't done it for almost fifteen years. My parents had lost confidence in my abilities.

We drove all the sheep to one side and into a corner of Enclosure 1. Mother pointed to the target sheep. Father bent over, rushed into the flock, and emerged dragging a sharp-horned sheep by its right hind leg to the gate where Mother and the ladles were. Meanwhile, I stood at the open gate to ensure no sheep escaped.

Dried juniper was added to the ladle of smoldering dung, and thick smoke rolled up. Mother put the ladle around and under the sheep as Father gripped its horns. After purifying the sheep with the juniper smoke, Mother held the sheep while Father took out the piece of blue cloth and hung it on the right side of the sheep's neck. Father held the ladle of clean water, considered "black water,"⁸⁸ and poured it from the sheep's head to its tail. Next, he took the ladle of milky water ("white water") and poured it from the sheep's tail to its head. Finally, he smeared butter on its horns and nose and put bits of butter in its mouth. We released the sheep after all that. My parents observed the sheep after we released it, and Mother said, "Look! It's going to shake!"

The sheep shook its head and body, and drops of liquid flew about as my parents expected. We all yelled, "Victory to the deities! Victory to the deities!"

Mother explained that the sheep shaking its head and body was a good omen and that sometimes, the sheep didn't shake after the ritual.⁸⁹

Mother was satisfied with what we had done. Today was a good day for locals, and a great day for Mother, because it was her birthday, which she had mentioned a few days earlier. She reminds us every year, but nothing happens when this day arrives. Mother reminded us again while I was preparing to go to the monastery, "The thirteenth day of Lo sar is a great day. I was born on this day. If I had been born a boy, I would surely be a reincarnation of a holy *bla ma*."

Father joked, "You could be a *mkha' 'gro ma* 'realized female being who aids Tantric meditators'!"

We laughed as our conversation moved to today's journey. My parents prepared the Lo sar gifts we would take with us.

Mother was the only one who knew the exact date of her birthday, which was an auspicious day during Lo sar, so it was easy for

⁸⁸ This ritual requires "black" and "white" water.

⁸⁹ See Limusishiden (2019:239-140) for an example of a sheep not shaking, which I paraphrase: Monk Nangsuu held a big bowl of whitish milk, rubbed the sheep's head, the wool on its back, and finally its limbs. He poured the whitish milk on the sacred sheep's head, into her ears, and onto her back. To everyone's amazement, the ewe kept perfectly still. This was conclusive proof that the deity was angry.

her to remember, and it was the day Mother collected the platters of food on the tables in Room 4. We had never celebrated her birthday, not because we had forgotten. It just wasn't our custom.

When my siblings and I were young children, we were told never to eat anything from the platters on the tables in rooms 3 or 4. Nevertheless, despite Mother's warnings, on the thirteenth day of Lo sar, most platters were empty because we had snuck into the guest room since the first day of Lo sar and nibbled on what was there. Sometimes in desperation, Mother locked our guest room. As we grew older, local leaders ordered us not to buy and eat junk food, so the food on platters was less attractive to children.

In my childhood, Mother stored Chinese mooncakes, biscuits, candy, and crystal sugar on the thirteenth day of Lo sar and later offered them to neighbor women when they visited. Mother saved the food that looked and tasted good and often warned us during Lo sar, "Don't eat the food on the platters! What will others say if most of the platters in the guest room are nearly empty? How shameful if there is nothing to give Lo sar guests!"

Father, Brother, and I left for the monastery. Mother wasn't persuaded to accompany us, no matter what we said about worshipping the *gos sku* 'a huge applique *thang ka*⁹⁰ exhibited on the side of a hill' (see FIG 81). "I can't go. I need to look after our livestock," she generally explained whenever Father asked her to go somewhere.

We reached the monastery after two hours of driving. It was my family members' first time seeing and worshipping the *gos ksu*. We were usually busy with the weddings of our relatives on this day. We also weren't sure of the exact date of the monastery activities.

⁹⁰ *Thang ka* are a form of primarily Tibetan sacred representation consisting of an image panel that is painted, embroidered, appliqued, or printed. Often placed in a textile frame, the image panel frequently depicts deities, mandalas, deities, prominent religious figures, or famous scenes. *Thang ka* are hung up high in monastic halls, village temples, and family homes as objects of veneration. A piece of silk often hangs over the image to prevent defilement by secular life and protects the image from dust and light. In the context of village ritual, setting up images creates interior and exterior worlds mediated through the representation of the images (Kondro Tsering 2012:10).

Fortunately, this year, there were no weddings to attend on this day.

My family and some paternal relatives collected around 10,000 RMB and offered it on the eleventh day of Lo sar in 2017 to Klu tshang Monastery to chant the *Bka' 'gyur*. About 300 monks chanted for a couple of hours one morning as some of our group members circumambulated the monastery while others prepared lunch for the monks in the monastery kitchen. With A lags 'ja' mo's assistant's help, we chose a day during Lo sar for this ritual. Otherwise, we would have had to wait for a month because there was a long list of families, tribes, and communities who would offer *nyin thub* that involved preparing and providing breakfast and lunch to all the monastery monks for the thirty days after Lo sar.

With Bshad sgrub's help, Smar khams Monastery promised to chant *Bka' 'gyur* during Lo sar in 2016. Father took the *Bka' 'gyur* from our home to the monastery in his car and offered 2,000 RMB. The monks informed Father that they had finished chanting four days later, so Father returned to pick up the *Bka' 'gyur*.

Thanks to Bshad sgrub, Smar khams Monastery agreed to chant *Yum dum pa bcu gnyis* in 2015. Father took the volumes from Room 2 to the monastery and brought them back after the monks had finished chanting.

When I was a child, Father, Sister, and I chose a day during Lo sar to read my family's scriptures, such as '*Phags pa brgyad stong ba* and *Sangs rgyas sman bla*. Meanwhile, Brother turned the pages of the scripture books one by one, which was believed to bring merit equal to the merit gained by those who read the scriptures. Mother offered butter lamps, cooked for us, and tended our livestock on this day.

We reached the monastery at about ten AM. Many cars were parked in an orderly way near the monastery, thanks to parking officers. We thought we were late but learned the ritual would begin at eleven AM, giving us enough time to circumambulate the monastery once. Many people were already circumambulating. After we finished, we saw monks carrying the long, rolled *gos sku* up the hill to be unrolled. A crowd followed. More pilgrims joined the procession once they saw the monks carrying the *gos sku*.

We spun each prayer wheel along the path as we

circumambulated the monastery and monks' quarters. The crowd sped up once they saw the monks and the *gos sku*. I noticed a landslide had blocked the path behind the monastery, which seemed to be an annual occurrence. I had once asked a young monk from this monastery, "Why is the monastery situated in such a dangerous place? What if the mountain collapses one day?"

"Impossible! Deities protect it! Everyone knows that!" he declared with absolute assurance.

No one was prostrating around the monastery because of the blocked path. Today was understood to be a great day to prostrate because the merit earned was double that of ordinary days, and pilgrim groups typically prostrated around the monastery on such days.

Dust on the path up to our ankles enveloped our feet. Most pilgrims wore new robes. The lower parts were soon covered with dust, but I heard no complaints.

The crowds continued to swell as more pilgrims arrived.

Tens of monks started unrolling the *gos sku* down the hill. Other monks sat cross-legged, facing the *gos sku* on a platform in front of it. *Bla ma* made up the first row of monks. When the monks completed unrolling the *gos sku*, they joined the other monks sitting in front of it and started chanting. Pilgrims surrounded the stage where the monks were chanting. After a while, when the monks had finished chanting, one-third of them stood on the edge of the right section of the stage, signaling that it was time for the pilgrims to worship the *gos sku*.

Pilgrims went up on the platform to worship the *gos sku*. Suddenly, they clustered more tightly on the platform's right side. Those in the middle found it difficult to breathe, children cried, and warnings grew louder from the disciplinarian monks, who made pilgrims line up when they climbed up the platform. One by one, the pilgrims bent forward and touched their foreheads to the bottom of the *gos sku*. It was not long before half of the pilgrims had finished worshipping.

Now that it was less crowded, Father, Brother, and I got in line and climbed up to the platform, passing between the *gos sku* and monks who were sitting on the platform. I realized it was an image

printed on plastic when we got near the *gos sku*. Two monks threw our *kha btags* up on the *gos sku* as they did for other worshippers. When I bent forward and touched my forehead to the bottom of the *gos sku*, a monk said, "Don't worship plastic. Don't you see the *bla ma* over there? Worship him!"

A monk sat with a box, collecting money from whoever made offerings. We were still in a line and slowly moving to where a child *bla ma* held a traditional scripture and patted people's heads with it. The child *bla ma* touched our heads with the scripture volume as we left the platform.

We walked to A lags 'ja' mo's quarters to present Lo sar gifts after we finished worshipping. He was absent, but his two assistants were there, serving visitors. They offered us milk tea and cooked meat. Father said that we would set off after worshipping the *bla ma*.

There were many visitors. Some from farming areas had come with three big baked loaves of bread and *kha btags*. A lags 'ja' mo was very busy. He met each visitor personally in a room for a very short time before greeting the next visitor. We were soon able to enter his room and prostrate three times. Father didn't offer special Lo sar gifts. Instead, he presented a box of milk, fruit-flavored beverages, and *kha btags*. We had invited A lags 'ja' mo to our home just before Lo sar and presented gifts at that time. There was little conversation. A lags 'ja' mo asked if there was anything he could do to help us. After Father replied that we had just come to worship him, he tapped our heads with a scripture volume, and we left.

FIG 80. The chosen sheep after the ritual in Enclosure 1.



FIG 81. The *gos sku* at Klu tshang Monastery.



FIG 82. Pilgrims wait to touch their heads to the *gos sku* at Klu tshang Monastery.



THE FOURTEENTH DAY OF THE FIRST LUNAR MONTH (1 MARCH 2018)

The biggest local horserace had begun the day before. We missed the first day, which was only for horses owned and ridden by local Tibetans. Today was different. Horses were owned and ridden by local Chinese, Muslim merchants, and local Tibetans. A few days earlier, a local Muslim merchant had imported tens of good horses from other areas after noticing the huge local market for racehorses. Rumor had it that he had drugged his horses before the horserace, which explained why most of his horses got top awards. Locals thought the local horserace had been turned into a dishonest business, explaining why there were now two horseraces.

The horserace venue was about an hour's drive from our home in a huge government-owned field that had been plowed during the commune period. Brother and I set off for the horserace after breakfast.

It was windy when we arrived, and the horserace hadn't started. Brother and I met some of our relatives, who suggested we stay in their car. Great idea! We didn't have to wait in the wind. Periodically, a gust of wind rolled up dust from the field and covered the sky. Some locals were in groups, chatting, smoking, and laughing in the dust.

My relatives had been here the day before and shared news of a local man's horse that had died after it won first place in the 2,500-meter race. Everyone felt sorry. The horse owner had refused to sell it when someone had offered 110,000 RMB a few months earlier. The race distance had been shortened because of the horse's death and the near death of another horse.

Livestock are usually weak in late winter and early spring because of harsh, cold weather and less forage. Many locals criticized the races at this time because it was torturing the horses. A few years earlier, horseraces had been held only in summer and autumn. But once there was a horserace, horse owners registered, and locals came to watch, though some said, "*Dud 'gros dud 'gro zhon pa la lta rin ci yang med* 'Animals riding animals is not worth watching!"

"The horserace just started!" someone suddenly shouted. Many scrambled out of their cars and rushed to one side. We followed as the

wind blew dust everywhere. The first group of horses ran from west to east. The audience was on the north side of the area, where cars were parked. A massive dust cloud was rolling from the west. Horses gradually appeared before the dust cloud and soon emerged from the dust. The horses seemed faster than the wind. When the horses neared us, most of the audience yelled and prayed to mountain deities. A few - I guess they were the horse owners - flung liquor at the racing horses. When the horses approached the finish line, I had no idea about the winning horse. Thick dust enveloped the horses. After all the horses had crossed the finish line, most of the audience scurried back to the cars, again seeking refuge.

Soon the next group of horses started. Locals came out of the cars again and energetically yelled, and as soon as the horses crossed the finish line, most onlookers rushed back to their cars to wait for the next batch of horses.

Brother got in a car with his friends while I tried to take pictures, but it was difficult because dust soon covered the camera lens. We then decided to return home.

When we got home, I learned that Cousin Dga' skyid lha mo and Ma ma would leave tomorrow because Cousin Dga' skyid lha mo's school would start two days later. Dga' skyid lha mo brought some cooked meat in a tray, saying it was from Ma ma. They didn't want to take it to their home in the township town because there was already plenty of meat there. Mother returned the empty tray and gave some cash to Dga' skyid lha mo, who exclaimed, "Yea! I got 170 RMB in total during Lo sar. I've never received so much money before!"

"Wow! 170 RMB? You are richer than me! What are you going to do with all that money?" I said in mock surprise.

"I'm going to give it all to Ma ma to take care of," she said.

Dga' skyid lha mo asked, "A kho? Can you cook hotpot and make fruit salad again when I return with Zla ba sgrol ma next time? It was so delicious."

"No problem!" I promised, realizing I had forgotten my promise to cook hotpot and make fruit salad for them during Lo sar.

After Dga' skyid lha mo left, I wanted to show Mother the videos and pictures I had taken with my phone of the horserace, but I

couldn't remember where I had put my phone. None of my family members had seen it. I guessed I had put it somewhere unconsciously and told Mother I would show her later when I located it.

After dinner, Mother asked if I had found my phone. I resumed searching, and Brother went to other rooms looking for it. I knew I would particularly regret losing the pictures I had taken during Lo sar if I had lost my phone.

Mother suggested I had lost it at the horseraces, but I distinctly remembered bringing it home. Brother also thought I had lost it at the horseraces. Mother considered losing something during Lo sar to be a bad omen.

Mother picked up two sheep dung pellets, removed half of the pellets, and began divining while I searched each room. Mother put the two pieces of sheep pellets into her left hand after shaking them in her right hand, praying to Tara and Yul lha Deity, and chanting. She repeated this process three times, interpreted the orientation of the pieces of sheep dung in her left palm, and said, "It is under something very thick where it is very dark."

After a few minutes, Brother came with my iPhone. He had found it in my quilt. I had changed out of my dusty clothes as soon as we returned home, and then I had helped Mother prepare supper. I still don't know how my phone got under my quilt.

Mother had learned divination from her mother and had been divining since I was a child. I have never witnessed a time when Mother's divination was inaccurate.

FIG 83. Racehorses in windy weather.



FIG 84. People gather for horseraces despite the weather.



THE FIFTEENTH DAY OF THE FIRST LUNAR MONTH (2 MARCH 2018)

Father was standing near the window, phoning Bshad sgrub, who he had been trying to contact since the beginning of Lo sar. Father wanted him to chant in our home. My parents usually invited him to our home when a ritual was required. However, he had been swamped with duties as a *dgon pa'i gnyer pa* 'monastery steward' for a year and couldn't go anywhere until the next steward signed his name, which would be before noon today.

Father hung up and excitedly hurried off to the monastery to pick up Bshad sgrub. "Will he stay here tonight as usual?" Mother enquired.

"He only has time to stay this afternoon," Father replied.

"Of course! He probably needs to chant at other homes," Mother commented.

"I must go now to be at the monastery before eleven," Father replied.

Mother reminded Father to buy *rtsam pa* in the township town because making *gtor ma* during the ritual required a lot of *rtsam pa*.

At around twelve-thirty PM, Father returned with Bshad sgrub, who was served tea, meat, bread, apples, *zhun*, and *thud*.

Bshad sgrub stood and walked to Room 2 after chatting with my parents and instructing them to keep a fire burning on the incense altar in front of our house. I helped Bshad sgrub hang the chanting drum from Room 2's ceiling. Mother brought a pack of *rtsam pa* Father had bought, a kettle of warm water, and several trays and basins that Bshad sgrub had used for the ritual during his last visit. Mother had kept them in Room 2 for about a half-year. Bshad sgrub told me to bring a container filled with *lud* 'sheep dung powder'.

"Rice or *lud*? My family has enough rice," asked Mother because, on his last visit, he had filled a container with rice.

"*Lud* is better," Bshad sgrub replied.

I went to the pile of sheep dung near my family's sheep pen with a container where a small pile of *lud* was near a big pile of sheep pellets. Mother had winnowed *lud* from the sheep dung pellets during an

afternoon breeze. Tiny bits of sheep dung and dung powder blew to one side. The fire caught more quickly once the *lud* was removed. Mother used *lud* to heat the *hu tse*. *Lud* burned slowly and lasted longer, keeping the *hu tse* warm all night.

I brought the container of *lud* to Bshad sgrub, who looked at it and said it needed to be compacted. Meanwhile, he mixed *rtsam pa* with water in a container to make *gtor ma*. I pressed down as much as I could on the *lud*, which satisfied Bshad sgrub, who opened his yellow bag and took out a bunch of *rtsang thur*⁹¹ resembling chopsticks, except the ends were triangular. He put each wooden stick in the *lud* in a circle around the container's rim. Told to bring a *kha btags*, I rushed to Mother, who took me to Room 4 and gave me a yellow one. Whenever we need to find something in our house, we ask Mother, who always knows.

Bshad sgrub wrapped the container of *lud* and the wooden sticks in the yellow *kha btags*, took a small image of Dam can Deity, put it at the top of a wooden stick, and put it in the middle of the container wrapped in the yellow *kha btags*. Bshad sgrub placed the container of *lud* on a shelf where Mother regularly offers butter lamps.

Next, Bshad sgrub made *gtor ma* in various shapes and placed them on different trays on the short-legged tables in front of him. When he ordered me to bring red melted butter, Mother said it was on the stove in Room 1. She had heated butter on the stove in a mug mixed with red powder Bshad sgrub had brought. Mother was now busy chopping frozen mutton on a wooden board in Room 1 in preparation for making mutton-stuffed dumplings.

Bshad sgrub asked me to paint most of the *gtor ma* and bring the pure melted butter that Mother had prepared in a small kettle. The pure melted butter symbolized "white." Bshad sgrub told me to paint the area he had marked on the *gtor ma* with pure melted butter. Not long after, he told me to bring ink. I then painted some parts of the *gtor ma* with ink as he directed. He explained that each colored part of the *gtor ma* meant they were offerings to different deities. The red one was for Yul lha, who liked blood, explaining why goat blood had once

⁹¹ Wooden sticks made from *skyer pa* (*barberis*, barberry) that grow near sky burial sites.

been used to color the *gtor ma*.

When Bshad sgrub finished making *gtor ma*, I had nearly finished coating all of the *gtor ma*, following Bshad sgrub's instructions. There were two platters of *gtor ma*. The biggest one was twenty centimeters tall, while the rest were the size of small butter lamps. He opened his bag, took out a scripture wrapped in yellow cloth, and chanted for about one hour.

My parents asked him to eat with us and rest. He paused and enjoyed a meal with us. It was now around four PM. After Bshad sgrub finished eating, Father asked, "Will my family encounter misfortune in this new year? If so, what should we chant to avoid it?"

Bshad sgrub told me to bring his bag from Room 2, and I did so. He took out a small, round, flat metal box that contained two dice. Bshad sgrub put the dice in his right hand, shook them, and put them back in the small round flat box he now held in his left hand while praying and chanting quietly. He did this three times, interpreted it according to the orientation of the dice in the box, and said gently, "There will be no disaster, but it is good if your family keeps chanting *mar rdze* in daily life and puts up more prayer flags."

Mother turned to me, "Did you understand that? You can chant while you are away from home."

"This indicates that Yul lha is not so happy with you! Unbelievable!" Bshad sgrub said to Father and repeated the divination to make sure.

"What can I do?" Father asked uneasily.

Bshad sgrub said nothing until he finished the divination. "I suggest you offer a piece of flesh to Yul lha. Offer it on the altar in front of his temple in Khri ka County Town. It will make him happier and help you in any case!" he said.

"Sure, I'll do it tomorrow. My family has never stopped offering him incense at home, and we also visit his temple, but I've never offered meat. Maybe that offended Yul lha," Father replied.

My parents asked if Sister and I needed to be careful about anything in the New Year. Bshad sgrub replied, "Daily chanting is helpful so things will go well."

Finally, Father asked about himself, told Bshad sgrub several

ways he planned to earn money, and wondered which money-making plan would be the least successful. Bshad sgrub did the divination ritual again and identified the good ones and those less likely to succeed.

Father did this every year and followed Bshad sgrub's divination.

"I will ask for your divination if I have more concerns later," added Father.

Bshad sgrub agreed, got up, returned to the shrine, and started chanting, beating the chanting drum with his right hand while holding a *rdo rje* 'vajra' in his left hand. I stayed with him in Room 2 in case he needed anything.

A bit later, Bshad sgrub told me to fling a copper bowl of sacred water to the south. I went outside and tossed the water as directed. Later, he handed me a small *gtor ma* on a plate and told me to take it outside and fling it in the same direction as before.

After a short period of more chanting, I flung another small *gtor ma* in the same direction, and did the same with other small *gtor ma*, one by one, as Bshad sgrub ordered. I threw them all to the south.

Only the biggest, triangular-shaped, red, white, and black-colored *gtor ma* remained when it was almost dusk. Mother and Brother came, knelt at the entrance of Room 2, and Father told me to do the same. Mother had prepared two hats for us. Father told me to take the bunch of *khyi gdugs* 'tall grass livestock rarely eat' that he had prepared and matches. Father and I waited at the entrance of Room 2 after putting on our robes, both robe sleeves, and our hats.

After a short period of chanting, beating the hanging drum, and moving his left hand in all directions with the vajra, Bshad sgrub gestured to Father, who picked up the plate with the big, triangular *gtor ma* and stood. After more chanting, Bshad sgrub gestured for us to leave while he continued chanting. Father passed the plate of *gtor ma* above my family members' heads. We all bent our heads as he moved the plate. I came out of the room and followed Father, holding the bunch of grass. We headed in a westerly direction and did not speak nor look back as Bshad sgrub had instructed. We walked for about five minutes and reached a path Father indicated was the right place.

Father took the *gtor ma* out of the plate and ensured its head was turned west. I placed all the grass on the *gtor ma*, but Father removed most of it, burned a little grass, and extinguished the fire with soil. We left after making sure no fire might burn our pasture.

We left with the empty plate and silently returned home. Bshad sgrub had completed chanting. Mother brought a ladle of water mixed with a little milk from a container placed near Bshad sgrub while he was chanting. The watery milk was considered sacred water after Bshad sgrub blew on it when he finished chanting. Mother told us to wash our hands and wet our hair with the sacred water before entering Room 1.

Bshad sgrub was invited into Room 1 again, where Mother offered fresh milk, cooked mutton, fried bread, baked bread, dumplings, and a bowl of yogurt. Bshad sgrub and my parents chatted while eating. Father took out 200 RMB and offered it to Bshad sgrub for '*bul ba* 'pay for chanting'. He initially refused, saying it was too much. Father insisted, saying it was only a small amount, and then asked, "How much do other families pay you? I have never asked. Is there some standard?"

"There is no standard, and I never ask for payment. The amount depends on the family. Most families pay 200 RMB. Others pay one hundred, 150 RMB, or fifty RMB," Bshad sgrub replied.

After chatting with my parents for a while, Bshad sgrub was ready to leave for another home to hold a ritual. We escorted him to our car, and Father drove him into the night.

Mother next rushed into Room 1 in fear that our cat would attack the cooked meat on the short-legged table, and I went to pack my luggage for my departure to Xi'an City the next day.

FIG 85. Bshad sgrub chants and beats a drum in Room 2.



CONCLUSION

Electricity, TV, telephones, and cars were not part of my early childhood. Most locals walked while making Lo sar visits. Some elders rode horses. You could hear folk songs during Lo sar visits, and elders gave good wishes when you visited. Such songs and good wishes are now silent.

In the last couple of years, my home community has experienced rapid changes sped by the arrival of electricity, smartphones, and internet access. These changes have altered and diminished the rituals. Local children still enjoy Lo sar visits, mostly because they receive cash gifts. Some local young men don't go on Lo sar visits unless their family or neighbors have a car. They prefer staying at home, using the cold weather as an excuse. Some distant relatives didn't visit my family during Lo sar. Instead, they sent Hongbao 'red packet, digital money' Lo sar gifts via WeChat.

Furthermore, local traditional weddings have become less appealing as the families involved seek convenience over tradition. For example, on the wedding day, the number of attendees has dramatically decreased, and locals don't feel free when performing in public. They don't want a video or photo of mistakes during their performance to be posted on the internet, making them a target of ridicule.

Also, fewer young men attend traditional weddings. Most who take the college entrance examination fail and prefer staying home rather than facing questions from others. Those who graduated from college generally have jobs in various places away from their home communities, and their winter holidays are often too short to attend local activities. Most who attend local weddings and other celebrations such as horseraces are between thirty and fifty. Locals attending weddings in the restaurants are not there to enjoy the folksongs and elders' orations but for the food, which is critically evaluated and used to measure a wedding's success. Traditional weddings are very different. They are evaluated based on the folk songs performed by local younger singers, the dialogues decorated with proverbs ⁹²

⁹² Dialogue content typically includes comments on the couple's youth and

between elders from the groom and bride's sides, and the number of guests.

As locals' life conditions improve and local young men's income increases, they prefer taking their immediate family members and elder relatives on pilgrimages to places like Lha sa or on holiday to a hot spring resort in Khri ka when Lo sar approaches. Such choices do not require preparing for Lo sar and participation in weddings and other celebrations. They feel less burdened. Such people update their movements on WeChat by posting pictures and videos and are keen to be followed and admired by others. That then motivates their plans to travel the following year.

Elders and children enjoy Lo sar. Elders have visitors and receive gifts of cash. Children are given food and also obtain cash gifts. Adults are busy with Lo sar preparations and serving guests. Locals are more energetic during Lo sar, except for youth who failed the college entrance examination or have not found a secure government job after college graduation. To avoid questions, they choose not to visit locals but instead return to cities where they work during Lo sar time.

need for support and advice, examples and details of previous marriages between members of their respective tribes, and self-introductions since the elders may not know each other very well.

FURTHER READING

NOTE: I translated Zanglinian as 'Tibetan Calendar'⁹³ New Year'. I used Pinyin for names and terms in my comments on papers written in Chinese.

1

Yao Zhaolin's (1986) study of the history of the Tibetan New Year is based on differences between the Zanglinian 'Tibetan Calendar New Year' and Gongbu [Kong po, refers to most areas of the current Linzhi (Nying khri) in the Tibet Autonomous Region] New Year. The author pointed out that the Tibetan Calendar New Year celebration existed at least from the beginning of the Qing Dynasty. He collected the following folktale about the Gongbu New Year from locals:

During the reign of Tibetan emperor Chizudezan [Khri srong lde btsan], the Gongbu King was about to leave for Lhasa with soldiers to help the Tibetan emperor. However, because it was harvest time in Gongbu, he decided to celebrate the New Year earlier than usual and wanted his soldiers to have a good time with a big meal to encourage them.

This is offered as an explanation as to why the Gongbu New Year is one month earlier than the Tibetan Calendar New Year.

⁹³ Janson (2007:1) explains:

The Tibetan calendar is derived from the Indian calendar tradition; it has the same general structure as Indian calendars, but the details differ significantly. The basis for the Tibetan calendar is the Kalacakra Tantra, which was translated from Sanskrit into Tibetan in the 11th century. It is based on Indian astronomy, but much modified. The calendar became the standard in Tibet in the second half of the thirteenth century.

See more at Lobsang Yongdan (2017:92):

...Tibetans not only translated a large number of the Jesuits' works into Tibetan between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, they also reformed the Tibetan calendar in accordance with the Jesuit-influenced calendar of the Qing.

Lin (1958) briefly describes the Tibetan Calendar New Year, the Dai nationality New Year, and the Miao nationality New Year.

Cuomu (1990) describes the Tibetan Calendar New Year, detailing how, at the rooster's crow on the morning of the first day of the New Year, locals fetched "auspicious water" from a river. Whoever fetched a container of water first would have good fortune for the entire new year.

Li Hong (1996) describes preparation for the Tibetan Calendar New Year. Each Tibetan family put barley grain in a container filled with water at the beginning of the twelfth month. By the first day of the Tibetan Calendar New Year, families put the sprouted grain in front of a Buddha image and prayed for good crops in the coming year.

Nam mkha'i nor bu's (1983:186-191) description of Lo sar is based on his 1951 diary during travel in Eastern Tibet, particularly among nomads in the Rdza chu kha (Shiqu) area and the Mgo log tribes of Gser tha (Gser rta, Seda), in Mdo khams. Lo sar preparation details included activities on the twenty-third or the twenty-fifth day of the twelfth month based on the Tibetan calendar. Nomad families near monasteries visited the monasteries with *gro zho* 'wild yams and yogurt' and attended a ritual. Those who lived far from monasteries held a *gor klud* ritual in their tents on the twenty-ninth day of the twelfth month, which involved each family making a black human-like figure riding a yak made of livestock dung. The mounted figure held livestock intestines and featured livestock stomachs on the head. Various ropes used to tie livestock decorated the body. The figures were taken to a place where the family's black yak-hair tent was not visible to eliminate livestock disease and to prevent livestock disease in the coming new year. Other details included observing the orientation of thick smoke from the tent stove to see if the next year would have good or bad fortune. The author also briefly describes daily activities from the first to the fifth days of Lo sar.

Chab 'gag rdo rje tshe ring's (2006) very brief contribution deals with how families from herding areas in Mtsho lho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture prepared and celebrated the New Year. A local proverb *Gos yag pa yod na drug pa'i glu rol la gon, zas zhim po yod na bod kyi lo gsar la zo* 'Wear it during the sixth lunar month meeting if you have beautiful clothes, eat it for the Tibetan New Year Festival if you have delicious food' was provided. The author described *rgyal po* bread that might be round or in the shape of a cross. It might have also featured flowers and other decorations made in the dough before baking. He noted that this bread was a gift when people visited during Lo sar. Lo sar gifts have changed as life conditions improved, with locals now presenting gifts such as bottles of liquor, tea bricks, and crystal sugar.

Li Yuqin (2012) observes and compares New Year festivals by Tibetans in Xinlong (Nyag rong) County and Danba (Rong brag) County, both located in Ganzi (Dkar mdzes) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province. The New Year in Xinlong is called *bcu gsum* 'thirteen', because Lo sar is often celebrated on the thirteenth day of the eleventh or twelfth month of the Tibetan calendar. Danba people celebrate New Year on the thirteenth day of the eleventh or twelfth lunar month or the following year's first or third lunar month.

The author describes similarities, such as the date of both celebrations involving the number thirteen. Both are celebrated according to a date designated by monks' divination. The celebration is held one or two days earlier or later if black clouds cover the stars.

The author also points out differences, such as the meaning and date of the New Year. For example, Danba residents celebrate this festival to commemorate the local hero, Ami Gedong (A mye sgo ldong),⁹⁴ who once passed through the Danba area. Ami Gedong reached local areas at different times; consequently, Danba residents celebrate the New Year in different months. New Year activities are

⁹⁴ A Geshiza folk hero who saved the Geshiza Valley from a ferocious ogress, also known among other Gyalrongic people. See Honkasalo (2019:64-65, 851) for more and also see Prins (2006:181-190): "During the festival [New Year] each family individually welcomes the warrior hero A mye sgo ldong."

related to Ami Gedong. For example, locals make dough images as offerings of Ami Gedong and his warhorse and weapons. They dance, tell Ami Gedong's stories, and sing songs praising him. Xinlong people celebrate this festival to commemorate King Gesar (Ge sar) and two other figures. King Gesar once came to expel demons, visiting locations at different times, partially explaining the different months of New Year celebrations in Xinlong.

Finally, the author describes local New Year changes in both locations. For example, some locals prefer celebrating the Chinese New Year Festival, so the number of Danba locals celebrating their traditional New Year decreases. Meanwhile, in Xinlong, locals are simplifying traditional New Year celebrations.

8

Tsering Bum et al. (2008) describe Lo sar observances in Ske ba Village, Mang chu (Mangqu) Township, Mang ra County, Mtsho lho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon Province. The authors focus on food and visiting - two critical components of the ritual for ordinary Tibetans - providing a historical perspective by comparing contemporary Lo sar observations with the past and commenting on how Lo sar is experiencing rapid change.

9

Tsering Bum's (2013) chapter about his Lo sar experiences when he was a teenager in Ske ba Village describes Lo sar preparations, including butchering a pig with local helpers; purchasing goods and encountering high vegetable prices; frying bread; collecting chunks of ice with a tractor-trailer in the early morning from a river with his brother-in-law and brother, putting the ice atop walls on Lo sar Eve, in the center of their threshing grounds, and in the fields near the village; holding a ritual for sheep dedicated to mountain deities; a family reunion; and a big meal on Lo sar Eve. Lo sar visiting is also described.

10

Thurston and Tsering Samdrup (2012) describe a Buddhist family's Lo sar in a predominantly Bon village (Stong skor) in Mgo mang Township, Mang ra County, Mtsho sngon Province. They detail the village's history and a family's daily household work, Lo sar preparations, and the events of the first fifteen days of the 2010 Lo sar.

Photos depict frying bread, making dumplings, offering incense, and a wedding.

11

Nangchakja (2011) described his Lo sar experience when he was eight years old (1995) in Bon skor Village, Bya mdo (Shagou) Township, Mang ra County. He wrote about his family's Lo sar Eve, offering incense, prostrating at his family's shrine, wearing new clothes, and Lo sar visits with his uncle.

12

Rin chen mtsho et al. (nd) feature descriptive essays in English about Lo sar celebrations in eleven different communities in Mtsho sngon, Gansu, and Sichuan provinces by Tibetan university students.

13

Cirenlamu (2013) focuses on the *sder kha* 'offering' 'plate of offering food' during the Tibetan Calendar New Year. She describes how the offering was made and explains why Tibetans offer *sder kha* at different times. Taboos related to *sder kha* are mentioned. For example, *sder kha* should be carefully made. If it collapses during the New Year, it signifies impending misfortune. The author describes *sder kha* changes in Lha sa City; for example, the citizens once put *sder kha* in front of Buddha images or in the dining room. However, nowadays, Lha sa residents arrange *sder kha* in front of Buddha images. Yak or sheep skulls are used in the dining room as *sder kha*. Some use gold-plated antelope skulls.

14

Chen Jiujin (1983) writes that the modern Tibetan Calendar New Year is essentially the same as the Chinese Lunar New Year. He suggests that ancient Tibetans celebrated New Year at harvest time, based on such records as the *Xintangshu·Tubozhuan* 'New Tang Dynasty Book·Tibetan Biography'. The author adds that Tibetans started celebrating New Year during the first lunar month because of political influences, but the ancient Tibetan New Year did not wholly disappear. Tibetan horseracing is described as a remnant of the ancient Tibetan Calendar New Year celebrated at harvest time.

15

Bian Liqiang and Luosang (2010) describe ethnic sports at Tibetan

traditional festivals, mentioning archery, rolling dice, singing enthusiastically, playing Tibetan cards, dancing for the entire night, wrestling, and horseracing during the Tibetan Calendar New Year. They do not describe how these activities were conducted.

16

Ciren Yangzong (2014) describes New Year celebrations in Lha sa, locals' attitudes toward the festival, and the meaning of the celebration based on the time before the Liberation of Tibet. The Tibetan Calendar New Year celebration was not just a time for enjoyment but also a time for religious activities. Tibetans believed that the more successful the festivities, the more fortune comes in the New Year.

The author indicates that, at a certain point, the Tibetan Calendar New Year was an enjoyable time for elite and wealthy families. Servants prepared, for example, in the twelfth month of the Tibetan calendar and cleaned the master's house thoroughly. Any day of the month was considered auspicious, but an auspicious day was chosen based on a Tibetan calendar to ensure the deities would not be offended.

The twenty-ninth day of the twelfth Tibetan calendar month, *dgu thug*, was a time for masters and their servants to have a meal together. There were games during the *dgu thug* meal; for example, people found cooked dough balls in their bowls and needed to explain the meaning of what was inside or drink liquor as punishment. The author also described the process of expelling demons after having the *dgu thug* meal, which required several people's efforts.

Locals visited relatives and friends on the third day of the New Year. It was also an opportune time to visit senior officials and eminent monks.

In the last paragraph, the author explains that people nowadays view the New Year primarily as a good time for a holiday. They prefer to travel rather than spending much effort to celebrate New Year at home. Travel, in contrast, provides new perspectives and relaxation.

17

Jianzan Cairang (1994) describes New Year celebrations in A mdo. He mentions that men competed in military skills during the Tibetan

Empire, and women sang folk songs as spring flowers began blooming. Later, after the Tibetan Empire collapsed, areas had their own dates for celebrating New Year and particular activities. The author also described New Year preparation, for example, cleaning the entire house in the last month of the year. Though there was no specific day for this, families did not randomly discard the garbage they collected during cleaning. Instead, they consulted a monk diviner or fortuneteller to learn in what direction the deity of that year lived for fear of discarding the garbage in the wrong location, which might have resulted in multiple misfortunes during the New Year.

The author includes New Year visiting and differences in celebrating New Year in Tibetan areas, for example, people from central Tibet and Khams regions fetched water from a river in the early morning of the first day of the New Year. However, in Amdo, people began visiting one another. He also mentions religious activities during the New Year, such as men offering incense together.

18

Huang Mingxin (1988) focuses on the differences and similarities in dates between the Tibetan Calendar New Year and the Chinese Lunar Spring Festival from 1978 to 1989, including timetables with detailed descriptions. He explains why, at times, Spring Festival is one month earlier than the Tibetan Calendar New Year. For example, in 1979, the Tibetan Calendar New Year was one month later than the Spring Festival because the Tibetan Calendar had two eleventh months (leap month) that year. The author also suggests that the one-day difference between these two festivals is that, according to the Tibetan Calendar, sunrise to the next sunrise is considered an entire day.

19

Lin and Qiu (2016) comments on Tibetans using new media during the Tibetan Calendar New Year celebration of 2015 in Lhasa City and its impact on traditional celebrations such as the Tibetan Calendar New Year.

Survey questionnaires were given to 300 people in Lhasa. Of the 208 returned questionnaires, forty-seven percent were from teenagers, and fifty-three percent were from older adults. Furthermore, fifty-three percent of 208 people preferred to travel or associate with

friends rather than go on pilgrimage to monasteries or circumambulate mountains, as is traditional during the New Year. The three reasons given to explain this were that internet and phone games were attractive, religious ceremonies were less interesting, and people wanted to view foreign celebrations.

Concerning Tibetan dramas and dances during the Tibetan Calendar New Year, the study suggests that while eighty percent of people liked drama, they did not watch it. Thirty-four percent said they did not understand drama contexts. More than seventy percent of respondents listened to pop music during the New Year. The authors suggest people prefer to access TV shows, movies, and pop music, easily choosing preferences via the phone and the internet.

The authors comment the use of new media might disseminate an amalgamated version of Tibetan traditional culture. New media quickly spreads and successfully advertises a new culture of consumer consumption, such as, for example, Double Eleven⁹⁵ and Double Twelve.⁹⁶

20

Libu Lakhi et al. (2009) describe New Year preparations and rituals involving his family greeting the ancestors and other activities during the New Year in his childhood in dzə qu (Dashui) Village, Xichang City, Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province. The PRC government classifies the Na mzi/Namuyi as Tibetan, which is what Na mzi believe. The Na mzi New Year is based on the Chinese lunar calendar. Ancestors visit the family on New Year's Eve and depart on the third day of the New Year. Preparations include cleaning the house and offering warm blood of slaughtered pigs to delight the ancestors. The family predicts the coming year by examining the slaughtered pig's spleen and bladder. For example, a small amount of urine in the bladder indicates dry weather.

The thirtieth day of the twelfth lunar month until the third day

⁹⁵ Double Eleven/Singles' Day is a shopping event in China initiated by Alibaba and adopted by other e-commerce platforms and retailers (<https://bit.ly/2TBs2W9>, accessed 20 January 2020).

⁹⁶ Double 12 is an outgrowth of Singles Day and is important for advertisers with budgets less than the mainstream brands dominating Singles Day (<https://bit.ly/3aqB2mT>, accessed 20 January 2020).

of the first lunar month is the most important New Year period. All family members should be at home during this time. The family members believe that washing their legs together in a wooden basin encourages family unity and brings good luck. Some family members do not go to bed on New Year's Eve. Instead, they accompany their ancestors.

On the first day of the New Year, a local meeting encourages a sense of unity among Na mzi villagers. Villagers cook and eat together. Children compare their cooked pig feet to see who has the biggest.

The third day of the New Year is the day the ancestors leave. Na mzi villagers visit the ancestors' graves and offer food. From the third to the fifteenth days, locals visit relatives and relax. New Year gifts include, for example, half a pig head or a pig tongue when visiting parents and grandparents.

21

Chilie Quzha (2006) provides five paragraphs about the Tibetan Calendar New Year, including a general description of Lo sar preparations. For example, from the beginning of the twelfth month of the Tibetan calendar, Tibetans place barley seeds in a container of water. On the first day of the first Tibetan Calendar month, the barley seeds in the water have sprouted and are offered in front of the Buddha altar along with prayers for a rich harvest. From the mid-twelfth month, bread is fried for the New Year. Before supper on the twenty-ninth of the twelfth month, families clean the kitchen and use white flour to draw the Eight Auspicious Symbols on the kitchen walls. The first day of the New Year is celebrated at home, with visiting beginning on the second day and lasting three to five days.

The author also offers a brief history of the Tibetan Calendar, suggesting that texts Princess Wencheng brought to Tibet enriched Tibetan astronomical calendars.

The Tibetan search engine, Yonzin, provides access to brief texts related to Lo sar, e.g.:

- Anonymous (nd) discusses Lo sar in Tibetan areas and explains that Tibetans celebrate Lo sar at different times due to various calendars and academic opinions.
- Mkhas grub khyung sprul 'jigs med nam mkha' (nd) briefly introduce Lo sar celebrations in Tibetan areas and attribute local differences to the difficulty of unifying the time for Lo sar dates in Tibetan areas.
- Mkhar nag skal bzang rgya mtsho (nd) writes that Lo sar might be the first celebration in Tibetan history, adding that the time of celebrating Lo sar varied owing to political influence.
- Bkra shis don grub (nd) states that Lo sar was not copied from other countries. Instead, it originated in local Tibetan harvest celebrations in early times, which became Lo sar as it is known today.
- Karma bde legs (nd) notes that Tibetans have a custom of offering sheep heads during Lo sar, which, in ancient Tibet, was a way to worship deities in the hope of good fortune and health.
- Shis tshang ljang myug (nd) argues that Tibetans have been using both "Lo gsar" and "Lo sar" since early times, which he supports by citing earlier texts.

TIBETAN REFERENCES

Anonymous. nd. Bod kyi lo gsar dar tshul dang rol stangs བོད་ཀྱི་ལོ་གསར་
དར་ཚུལ་དང་རོལ་སྟངས། [The Beginning of Tibetan Lo sar and Its
Celebration].

<https://bit.ly/36QoY9b>, accessed 11 January 2020

Bkra shis don grub བརྒྱལ་ཤིས་དོན་གྲུབ། nd. Bod kyi lo sar gyi byung 'phel skor
rags tsaṃ gleng ba བོད་ཀྱི་ལོ་སར་རྟེན་གྱི་བྱུང་འཕེལ་སྐོར་རགས་ཙམ་གླེང་བ། [Talk
About the Origin and Development of Tibetan Lo sar].

<https://bit.ly/2FLfcMN>, accessed 11 January 2020

Chab 'gag rdo rje tshe ring ཆབ་འགན་རྟེན་ཆེ་རིང་། 2006. Mtsho lho'i 'brog pa'i lo gsar rol stangs མཆོ་སྒྲུབ་འབྲོག་པའི་ལོ་གསར་རོལ་སྒྲུངས། [The Way Herding Families from Mtsho lho Celebrate New Year]. *Mtsho sngon dmangs khrod kyi rig gnas dpe tshogs མཆོ་སྒྲུབ་དམངས་སྤྱོད་ཀྱི་རིག་གནས་དཔེ་ཆོགས།* [Mtso sngon Folk Culture Collection Books]. Lanzhou 兰州: Kan su'u mi rigs dpe skrun khang ཀན་སུ་ལུ་མི་རིགས་དཔེ་སྐྲུན་ཁང་། [Gansu Nationalities Press].

Dam chos rgya mtsho དམ་ཚཱ་མུ་མཚོ། 2002. *Smar kham's lo rgyus* སྐུར་ཁམས་
ལོ་རྒྱུས། [The History of Smar kham's]. Zhang kang འང་ཀང་། Zhang
kang gyi ling dpe skrun kung zi འང་ཀང་གྱི་ལིང་དཔེ་སྐྱུར་ཀུང་ཟི། [Hong
Kong Horse Printing Co., Ltd].

Karma bde legs ཀཌ་བདེ་ལེགས། Bod lugs lo sar gyi lug mgo bshams mchod skor བོད་ལུགས་ལོ་སར་གྱི་ལུག་མགོ་བཤམས་མཆོད་སྟོར། [Discussion of Tibetan Lo sar Sheep Head Offerings].

<https://bit.ly/2RruSuf>, accessed 11 January 2020

Mkhar nag skal bzang rgya mtsho མཁར་ནག་སྐལ་བཟང་རྒྱ་མཚོ། nd. Bod kyi lo sar gyi 'pho 'gyur la cung tsam dpyad pa བོད་ཀྱི་ལོ་སར་གྱི་འཕེལ་བྱུང་ལ་ ཅུང་ཙམ་དཔྱད་པ། [Discussion of Development and Change of Tibetan Lo sar].

<https://bit.ly/2uN71xh>, accessed 11 January 2020

Mkhas grub khyung sprul 'jigs med nam mkha' མཁས་གྲུབ་བློ་བྲླུལ་འཇིགས་མེད་
ནཱ་མཁའ་པ་འདུན་པའི་ལོ་གསུམ་གྱི་མཁའ་མཁུ་པ་མཆོག་གི་ཐུགས་རྒྱུ་ལྟར་
མཁའ་མཁུ་པ་མཆོག་གི་ཐུགས་རྒྱུ་ལྟར་མཁའ་མཁུ་པ་མཆོག་གི་ཐུགས་རྒྱུ་ལྟར་
[Brief Discussion of Highland Tibetan Lo sar].

<https://bit.ly/30g7uUr>, accessed 11 January 2020

Mtsho lho bod rigs rang skyong khul nang bstan mthun tshogs dang
krung go'i bod brgyud nang bstan mtho rim slob gling nang
bstan zhib 'jug khang མཚོ་ལྷོ་བོད་རིགས་རང་སྐྱོང་ཁུལ་ནང་བསྟན་མཐུན་ཚོགས་དང་
ཀྲུང་གོ་བོད་བརྒྱུད་ནང་བསྟན་མཐོ་རིམ་སློབ་གླིང་ནང་བསྟན་ཞིབ་འཇུག་ཁང་། [Mtsho lho
Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture Buddhist Association and
China Advanced Tibetan Buddhist University Buddhist
Research Center, eds]. 1999. *Mtsho lho khul gyi dgon sde khag
gi lo rgyus snying bsdus* མཚོ་ལྷོ་ཁུལ་གྱི་དགོན་སྡེ་ལག་གི་ལོ་རྒྱུས་སྙིང་བསྟན། [*A
Brief History of Monasteries in Mtsho lho Tibetan
Autonomous Prefecture*]. Zi ling ཟི་ལིང་།: Mtsho sngon mi rigs
dpe skrun khang མཚོ་སྔོན་མི་རིགས་དཔེ་སྐྱུང་ཁང་། [Mtsho
sngon Nationalities Press].

Nag po skal bzang རག་པོ་སྐལ་བཟང་། [Nakpo Kelzang]. 2013. *Klu 'bum mi rgod ལྷ་འབྲུག་མི་རྟོན་།* [The Wild Man of Klu 'bum]. Zi ling ཟེ་ལིང་།: Mtsho ngon mi rigs dpe skrun khang མཚོ་རྒྱུ་མི་རིགས་དཔེ་སྐྱུན་ཁང་། [Mtsho ngon Nationalities Press]. 2 volumes.

Nam mkha'i nor bu ནམ་མཁའི་ནོར་བུ། 1983. *Byang 'brog gi lam yig བྱང་འབྲོག་གི་ལམ་ཡིག་ [A Journey into the Culture of Tibetan Nomads]*. Arcidosso: Shang-shung.

Pad+ma rdo rje པདྨ་རྡོ་རྗེ། (ed). 1989. *Dag yig gsar bsgrigs དག་ཡིག་གསར་བསྐྱེགས་ [Newly Edited Tibetan Dictionary]*. Zi ling ཟེ་ལིང་།: Mtsho ngon mi rigs dpe skrun khang མཚོ་ལྗོན་མི་རིགས་དཔེ་སྐྱུན་ཁང་། [Mtsho ngon Nationalities Press].

Shis tshang ljang myug ཤེས་ཙང་ལྷ་རྒྱལ་ཀྱང་། nd. Lo gsar dang lo sar gnyis gdam nga bya rung min la bskyar du dpyad pa ལོ་གསར་དང་ལོ་སར་གཉིས་གདམ་དབུ་རུང་མིན་ལ་བསྐྱར་དུ་དཔྱད་པ། [New Discussion of Whether We Should Choose Lo gsar or Lo sar].

<https://bit.ly/3OgcacX>, accessed 11 January 2020

ENGLISH AND CHINESE REFERENCES

Basso, Keith H. 1996. *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache*. Albuquerque: New Mexico University Press.

Bian Liqiang 卞利强 and Luosang 洛桑. 2010. Luetan zangzu chuantong jieri zhong de minzu tiyu huodong 略谈藏族传统节日中的民族体育活动 [A Brief Discussion of Tibetan Traditional Ethnic Sports Festival Activities]. *Xizang daxue xuebao (shehui kexueban) 西藏大学学报(社会科学版) [Journal of Tibet University (Social Science Edition)]* 2010(3):148-152.

<https://bit.ly/2VZoidi>, accessed 20 October 2019

Buffettrille, Katia. 2019. "Beasts, Men and Gods." A Red Purifying Smoke Offering (Marsang [dmar bsang]) in Trika (Amdo). *Études mongoles et sibériennes, centrasiatiques et tibétaines*. <https://bit.ly/2RtRFq3>, accessed 12 April 2020

- Chen Jiu Jin 陈久金. 1983. Zangzu gudai ceng yi maishu wei xinnian 藏族古代曾以麦熟为新年 [Ancient Tibetan Nationality Once Regarded Harvest Time as the New Year]. *Xizang yanjiu* 西藏研究 [*Tibetan Studies*] 1983(1):116-118.
<https://bit.ly/2o1qNSJ>, accessed 20 October 2019
- Chilie Quzha 赤烈曲扎 ['Phrin las chos grags]. 2006. *Xizang fengtuzhi* 西藏风土志 [*Records of Tibetan Natural Conditions and Customs*]. Xizang renmin chubanshe 西藏人民出版社 [Tibet Peoples Press], 153-155.
- Ciren Yangzong 次仁央宗 [Tshe ring g.yang 'dzoms]. 2014. Shisu shehui yu zongjiao shijian-lasa chuantong zangli xinnian 世俗社会与宗教实践-拉萨传统藏历新年 [Secular Society and Religious Practice-the Lhasa Traditional Tibetan New Year]. *Zhongguo zangxue* 中国藏学 [*China Tibetology*] 2014(1):124-130. <https://bit.ly/2oVp15S>, accessed 20 October 2019
- Cirenlamu 次仁拉姆 [Tshe ring lha mo]. 2013. "Dieka" mianji yu jiating xinyang shenghuo-Xizang zhongbu nianjie wenhua fuhao de biaobenshi yanjiu" 叠卡"面祭与家庭信仰生活-西藏中部年节文化符号的标本式研究 ["Sder kha" Dough Offerings and Family Beliefs and Life-A Study of Cultural Symbols in the New Year Festival in Central Tibet]. *Xizang daxue xuebao* 西藏大学学报 [*Tibet University Journal*].
<https://bit.ly/2opDlnc>, accessed 27 August 2019
- Cuomu 措姆 [Mtsho mo]. 1990. Zanglinian jianjie 藏历年简介 [A Brief Introduction to the Tibetan Calendar New Year]. *Xinan minzu daxue xuebao (renwen shekeban)* 西南民族大学学报 (人文社科版) [*Journal of Southwest Nationalities University (Humanities and Social Sciences Edition)*] 1990(1):17. <https://bit.ly/2zmU6B5>, accessed 27 August 2019
- Das, Sarat Chandra, Graham Sandberg, and A William Heyde. 1902. *A Tibetan-English Dictionary with Sanskrit Synonyms*. Calcutta: The Bengal Secretariat Book Depôt.
- Goldstein, Melvyn C (ed), TN Shelling and JT Surkhang (assistant eds), and with the help of Pierre Robillard. 2001. *The New Tibetan-English Dictionary of Modern Tibetan*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press.

- Honkasalo, Sami. 2019. *A Grammar of Eastern Geshiza-A Culturally Anchored Description*. PhD dissertation, University of Helsinki. <https://bit.ly/3oKFwjO>, accessed 23 January 2020
- Huang Mingxin 黄明信. 1988. Zangli xinnian yu nongli chunjie riqi yitong 藏历新年与农历春节日期异同 [Similarities and Differences Between the Tibetan Calendar New Year and Lunar Calendar Spring Festival]. *Zhongguo zangxue 中国藏学 [China Tibetology]* 1988(4):124-130.
<https://bit.ly/2P9i7oB>, accessed 20 October 2019
- Jäschke, Heinrich August. 1881. *A Tibetan-English Dictionary, with Special Preference to the Prevailing Dialects, to Which is Added an English-Tibetan Vocabulary*. Berlin 8W: Unger Brothers (Th Grimm).
- Janhunen, Juha. 2011. Appendix: Mongolian Toponyms in Nyangchakja A Mang rdzong Tibetan Life. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 11:250-251.
<https://bit.ly/3oGiVUI>, accessed 27 August 2019
- Janson, Savante. 2007. Tibet Calendar Mathematics.
<https://bit.ly/2RhuDD5>, accessed 11 January 2020
- Jianzan Cairang 坚赞才让 [Rgyal mtshan tshe ring]. 1994. Qiantan anmuduo zangqu de shengda jieri—luosa 浅谈安木多藏区的盛大节日-拉萨 [A Brief Discussion of Lo sar, the Tibetan Grand Festival in Amdo]. *Xibei minzu daxue xuebao (zhexue shehui kexueban) 西北民族大学学报(哲学社会科学版) [Journal of Northwest Nationalities University (Philosophy and Social Science Edition)]* 1994(3):76-79.
<https://bit.ly/2oYHY7J>, accessed 20 October 2019
- Jixiancairang [Lcags byams tshe ring]. 2012. *Tibetan Wedding Rituals in Gling rgya Village in Reb gong, Amdo*. Master's Thesis. University of Oslo.
<https://bit.ly/3nWJ7H8>, accessed 7 May 2021
- Klu thar rgyal. 2017. Dpal rgyal: Artist and Photographer. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 44:295-406.
<https://bit.ly/321NVi4>, accessed 27 August 2019

- Klu thar rgyal with CK Stuart and Sami Honkasalo. 2020. Last Memories - A mdo Tibetan Tribal Lives: Rdor jag and Thang ta. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 59. <https://bit.ly/3lfug8x>, accessed 11 November 2020
- Kondro Tsering. 2012. A Zorgay Tibetan Childhood and the Swedish translation by Katrin Goldstein-Kyaga as Min tibetanska barndom I Zorgay. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 17. <https://bit.ly/3skRxIP>, accessed 15 April 2021
- Li Hong 李宏. 1996. Zanglinian 藏历年 [Tibetan Calendar New Year]. *Xizang dangxiao* 西藏党校 [Tibet Party School] 1996(1):39. <https://bit.ly/2Ztth1l>, accessed 27 August 2019
- Li Yuqin 李玉琴. 2012. Sichuan zangqu liangge teshu nianjie de bijiao yanjiu 四川藏区两个特殊年节的比较研究 [A Comparative Study of Two Special New Year Festivals in Tibetan Areas of Sichuan Province]. *Xinan minzu daxue xuebao (Renwen shekeban)* 西南民族大学学报(人文社科版) [Journal of Southwest Nationalities University (Humanities and Social Science Edition)] 2012 (7):10-14. <https://bit.ly/32c5fS8>, accessed 20 October 2019
- Libu Lakhi (Li Jianfu 李建富, Dawa Tenzin) with Tsering Bum and Charles Kevin Stuart. 2009. China's na mzi Tibetans: Life, Language and Folklore: Volume One. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 2A. <https://bit.ly/3bxJGRL>, accessed 7 September 2020
- Limusishiden (Li Dechun 李得春). 2019. "Golden Family": The End of the Huzhu Mongghul Nobility. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 55. <https://bit.ly/2LbTrI7>, accessed 26 August 2019
- Lin 林. 1958. Zangzu, daizu, miaozu renmin shi zenyang guonian de 藏族, 傣族, 苗族人民是怎样过年的? [How Do the Tibetan, Dai, and Miao Nationalities Celebrate the New Year?]. *Minzu tuanjie* 民族团结 [Ethnic Solidarity] 1958(2):28. <https://bit.ly/3430ag8>, accessed 27 August 2019
- Lin Xiaohua 林晓华 and Qiu Yanping 邱艳萍. 2016. Meijiehua shehui yu zangzu chuantong jieri wenhua qianbian 媒介化社会与藏族传统节日文化变迁 [Media Society and the Change of Tibetan Traditional Festival Culture]. *Xinan minzu daxue*

- xuebao (renwen shekeban)* 西南民族大学学报 (人文社科版) [*Journal of Southwest Nationalities University (Humanities and Social Science Edition)*] 2016(8):153-157.
<https://bit.ly/2MWWJ36>, accessed 20 October 2019
- Lobsang Yongdan. 2017. A Scholarly Imprint: How Tibetan Astronomers Brought Jesuit Astronomy to Tibet. *East Asian Science, Technology and Medicine* 45:91-117.
- Nangchakja (Snying lcags rgyal). 2011. Mang rdzong bod rigs shig gi mi tshe [A Mang rdzong Tibetan Life]. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 11.
<https://bit.ly/3oGiVUI>, accessed 27 August 2019
- Nian Zhihai 年治海 and Bai Gengdeng 白更登 (eds). 1993. *Qinghai zangchuan fojiao siyuan mingjian* 青海藏传佛教寺院明鉴 [*The Clear Mirror of Tibetan Buddhist Monasteries in Qinghai*]. Lanzhou 兰州: Gansu minzu chubanshe 甘肃民族出版社 [Gansu Nationalities Press].
- Pad+ma rig 'dzin. 2017. Review: *Klu 'bum mi rgod*. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 45:51-65.
<https://bit.ly/2YoFkbp>, accessed 27 August 2019
- Prins, Maria C. 2006. The Rgyal rong New Year: A Case History of Changing Identity in Christiaan P Klieger (ed) *Tibetan Borderlands*. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 181-190.
- Rdo rje tshe brtan. 2013. A Tewo Tibetan Childhood. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 23. <https://bit.ly/2PXpsKx>, accessed 7 May 2021
- Rin chen mtsho, Li Ping/Tshe brtan sgrol ma, Brtan ma, Rin chen skyid, 'Jam dbyangs pa sangs, Rdo rje tshe brtan, Skal bzang skyid, Bsod nams dung mtsho, Skal bzang tshe brtan, Ye shes sgrol ma, and Tshe ring chos 'tsho, (Gerald Roche, ed). nd. *Lo sar in Mdo khams - An Advanced English Reader for Tibetan Students*. <https://bit.ly/32xMniu>, accessed 11 November 2020
- Smith, Stewart. 2017. *The Monasteries of Amdo. A Comprehensive Guide to the Monasteries of the Amdo Region of Tibet. Volume 2: Central, West and North Amdo*. Create Space Independent Publishing Platform.

- Thurston, Timothy. 2012. An Introduction to Tibetan *Sa bstod* Speeches in A mdo. *Asian Ethnology* 71:49-73.
<https://nirc.nanzan-u.ac.jp/nfile/4090>, 29 August 2020
- Thurston, Timothy and Tsering Samdrup. 2012. An A mdo Tibetan Pastoral Family's Lo sar in Stong skor Village. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 21:33-69.
<https://bit.ly/2PqhYyu>, accessed 27 August 2019
- Tsering Bum (Tshe ring 'bum) 2013. A Northeastern Tibetan Childhood. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 27.
<https://bit.ly/2MFt7cO>, accessed 27 August 2019
- Yao Zhaolin 姚兆麟. 1986. Cong Zanglinian, Gongbunian de yitong kan xizang nianjie zhi yanbian 从藏历年, 工布年的异同看西藏年节之演变 [Observing Development of Tibet New Year Celebrations Through Similarities and Differences Between the Tibetan Calendar New Year and Kong po New Year]. *Xizang yishu yanjiu* 西藏艺术研究 [*Tibet Art Studies*] 1986(3):73-77.
<https://bit.ly/2LdLhz2>, accessed 27 August 2019

TIBETAN TERMS

'ba' tho འབའཐོ།
 'bab rten འབབརྟེན།
 'bul ba འབུལ་བ།
 'di khyod kyi lo sar yin འདི་ཁྱོད་ཀྱི་ལོ་
 སར་ཡིན།
 'dod 'jo g.yang khyim འདོད་འཛོགས་ཡང་
 བྱིས།
 'grul khang gsar ba འགུལ་ཁང་གསར་བ།
 'grul khang rnying ba འགུལ་ཁང་རྟིང་བ།
 'ja' mo འཇའ་མོ།
 'jam dbyangs pa sangs འཇམ་དབྱངས་
 པ་སངས།
 'o le, khyod ra yong ne འོ་ལེ། ཁྱོད་ར་
 ཡོང་ན།
 'phags pa brgyad stong ba འཕགས་
 པ་བརྟུན་སྟོང་བ།
 'pho lung འཕོ་ལུང་།
 'phrin las chos grags འཕྲིན་ལས་ཆོས་
 གྲགས།
 a che ཨ་ཆེ།
 a dga' ཨ་དགའ།
 a kho ཨ་ཁོ།
 a lags 'ja' mo ཨ་ལགས་འཇའ་མོ།
 a ma lcam ཨ་མ་ལུམ།
 a mdo ཨ་མདོ།
 a mye sgo ldong ཨ་མྱེ་སྒོ་ལྷོང་།

a pa lo ཨ་པ་ལོ།
 a pa lo lon ཨ་པ་ལོ་ལོན།
 a pha ཨ་ཕ།
 a sgang ཨ་སྐང་།
 a zhang tshang, sku kyab ke bde
 mo yin na ཨ་ཙང་ཙང་། སྐུ་ཀྱའ་གེ་བདེ་མོ་
 ཡིན་ན།
 Amdo, a mdo ཨ་མདོ།
 ba shi thang བ་ཤི་ཐང་།
 bal bo བལ་བོ།
 bal bo'i lab tse བལ་བོའི་ལབ་ཅེ།
 ban de བན་དེ།
 bcu gsum བཅུ་གསུམ།
 bde b+he བདེ་བླ།
 bde mo yin བདེ་མོ་ཡིན།
 bdud shul klu ba བདུད་ཤུལ་སྐུ་བ།
 bdun btsugs བདུན་བཅུ་གསུམ།
 bka' 'gyur བཀའ་རྒྱུད།
 bla brang ལྷ་བར་།
 bla ma ལྷ་མ།
 bla ma 'tsham pa ལྷ་མ་འཆམ་པ།
 blo bzang ལྷོ་བཟང་།
 blo bzang bstan 'dzin rgya mtsho
 ལྷོ་བཟང་བསྐྱན་འཛིན་རྒྱུ་མཚོ།
 blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma ལྷོ་བཟང་
 ཆོས་ཀྱི་ཉི་མ།

blo rgya བོ་རྒྱ།
 bon བོན།
 bon skor བོན་སྒོར།
 brag dkar བླག་དཀར།
 brang 'go བླང་འགོ།
 brtan ma skyid བརྟན་མ་སྐྱིད།
 bsang khri བསང་ཁྲི།
 bse dri བཤེདྲི།
 bshad sgrub བཤད་སྒྲུབ།
 bstan 'dzin rgya mtsho བསྟན་འཛིན་རྒྱ་
 མཚོ།
 bsod b+ha བསོད་བླ།
 bsod nams བསོད་ནམས།
 bsod nams dung mtsho བསོད་ནམས་
 དུང་མཚོ།
 bsod nams skyid བསོད་ནམས་སྐྱིད།
 bsod nams tshe ring བསོད་ནམས་ཚེ་
 རིང།
 bstan 'dzin rgya mtsho བསྟན་འཛིན་རྒྱ་
 མཚོ།
 btsan mgon thar བཙན་མགོན་ཐར།
 btsun mo yag བཙུན་མོ་ཡག།
 btsun thar བཙུན་ཐར།
 btsun thar skyid བཙུན་ཐར་སྐྱིད།
 bu lo བུ་ལོ།
 bu re བུ་རེ།
 bya mdo བྱ་མདོ།

bya pho drug mo drug བྱ་ཕོ་དུག་མོ་དུག
 bya stod khugs བྱ་སྟོད་ཁུགས།
 bya stod ske chu gar dkar ya khul
 བྱ་སྟོད་སྐེ་ཚུ་གར་དཀར་ཡ་ཁུལ།
 byi'u mo བྱི་འུ་མོ།
 chos mtsho skyid ཚོས་མཚོ་སྐྱིད།
 chos skyong ཚོས་སྐྱོང།
 chos skyong srung ma ཚོས་སྐྱོང་སྤྱང་མ།
 chos gru ཚོས་གུ།
 chos tsha ཚོས་ཚ།
 chu ཚུ།
 chu rnga thang ཚུ་རྩ་ཐང།
 d+hiH tsha ལྷི་ཨ་ཚ།
 dam can དམ་ཅན།
 dar mtsho དར་མཚོ།
 dga' skyid lha mo དག་འཁྱིད་ལྷ་མོ།
 dge 'dun chos 'phel དགེ་འདུན་ཚོས་
 འཕེལ།
 dge bshes don grub དགེ་བཤེས་དོན་
 གྲུབ།
 dge lugs དགེ་ལུགས།
 dgo ba དགོ་བ།
 dgon pa'i gnyer pa དགོན་པའི་གཉེན་པ།
 dgra lha དག་ལྷ།
 dgu rgyags དགུ་རྒྱགས།
 dgu thug དགུ་ཐུག།
 dkar mdzes དཀར་མཛེས།

dkon mchog rgya mtsho དཀོན་མཆོག་
 རྒྱུ་མཆོ།
 dmar bsang དམར་བསང་།
 dpa' lung དཔལ་ལུང་།
 dpal be'u དཔལ་བེུ།
 dpal ldan དཔལ་ལྷན།
 dpal ldan lha mo དཔལ་ལྷན་ལྷ་མོ།
 dpal rgyal དཔལ་རྒྱལ།
 dpon po དཔོན་པོ།
 dpon tshang དཔོན་ཅང་།
 dud 'gros dud 'gro zhon pa la lta
 rin ci yang med འདྲ་འགྲོས་འདྲ་འགྲོ་
 རྩོན་པ་ལ་ལྷ་རིན་ཅི་ཡང་མེད།
 dud pa gtags འདྲ་པ་གཏགས།
 dung འདྲ།
 dung dkar འདྲ་དཀར།
 dzam b+ha lha རྩམ་བླ་ལྷ།
 g.yang 'bum rgyal གཡང་འབུམ་རྒྱལ།
 g.yer gshong chung ba rin po che
 གཡེར་གཤོང་ཆུང་བ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།
 gesar, ge sar གེ་སར།
 glag tshang che ba ལྷག་ཅང་ཆེ་བ།
 glag tshang chung ba ལྷག་ཅང་ཆུང་བ།
 glang ma ལྷང་མ།
 glang sgron skyid ལྷང་སྒོན་སྦྱིད།
 gna' ba གན་པ།
 gnam lha mkhar གནམ་ལྷ་མཁར།

gnam lha thar གནམ་ལྷ་ཐར།
 gnam mtsho གནམ་མཆོ།
 gong kha གོང་ཁ།
 gor klud གོར་ལུད།
 gos btags pa གོས་བཏགས་པ།
 gos sku གོས་སྐུ།
 gos yag pa yod na drug pa'i glu
 rol la gon, zas zhim po yod na
 bod kyi lo gsar la zo
 གོས་ཡག་པ་ཡོད་ན་བུག་པའི་སྐུ་རོལ་ལ་གོན།
 ཟས་ཞིམ་པོ་ཡོད་ན་བོད་གྱི་ལོ་གསར་ལ་ཟོ།
 gram pa གར་པ།
 gro ma གྲོ་མ།
 gro zho གྲོ་ཞོ།
 gser chen གསེར་ཆེན།
 gser rta གསེར་རྟ།
 gser tha གསེར་ཐ།
 gshin rje chos rgyal གཤིན་རྗེ་ཆོས་རྒྱལ།
 gtor ma གཏོར་མ།
 gyu lung གཡུ་ལུང་།
 gzhis dpon གཞིས་དཔོན།
 ha ra lbi ཧ་ར་ལྷེ།
 ha ra wil ཧ་ར་ལྷེལ།
 hu tse ཧུ་ཅེ།
 ja dbang ཇ་དབང་།
 ja khang ཇ་ཁང་།
 jo jo ཇོ་ཇོ།

jo jo lha khang རྫོག་ལྷ་ཁང་།
 jo khang རྫོག་ཁང་།
 jo le རྫོག་ལེ།
 kan lho ཀན་ལྷོ།
 kha btags ཁ་བདག་ས།
 kha wur ཁ་ལུར།
 khams ཁམས།
 khra tshang ཁ་ཚང་།
 khri ka ཁྱི་ཀ།
 khri srong lde btsan ཁྱི་སྟོང་ལྡེ་བཙན།
 khrung khrung ཁྲུང་ཁྲུང་།
 khus gdong ཁུས་གདོང་།
 khyed lhan rgyas sku khams bde
 legs sam ཁྱེད་ལྷན་རྒྱས་སྐུ་ཁམས་བདེ་
 ལེགས་སམ།
 khyi gdugs ཁྱི་གདུགས།
 khyi thang la bud na stag yin ཁྱི་
 ཐང་ལ་བུད་ན་སྟག་ཡིན།
 khyod slebs byung ngam ཁྱོད་སྤེལ་ས་
 བྱུང་ངམ།
 khyod yong ne ཁྱོད་ཡོང་ནེ།
 klu 'bum ལྷ་འབུམ།
 klu 'bum mi rgod ལྷ་འབུམ་མི་རྟོད།
 klu kho ལྷ་ཁོ།
 klu skyabs rgyal ལྷ་སྐུའམ་རྒྱལ།
 klu thar rgyal ལྷ་ཐར་རྒྱལ།
 klu tshang ལྷ་ཚང་།

klu tshang bshad sgrub dge 'phel
 gling ལྷ་ཚང་བཤད་སྐྱབ་དགེ་འཕེལ་གླིང་།
 klu tshang dgon bshad sgrub dar
 rgyas dge 'phel gling ལྷ་ཚང་དགོན་
 བཤད་སྐྱབ་དར་རྒྱས་དགེ་འཕེལ་གླིང་།
 ko ra ཀོ་ར།
 kong po ཀོང་པོ།
 kun thar skyid ཀུན་ཐར་སྐྱིད།
 lab tse ལབ་ཙེ།
 lag skor ལག་སྟོར།
 lcags byams rgyal ལུགས་བྱམས་རྒྱལ།
 lcags byams tshe ring ལུགས་བྱམས་ཚེ་
 རིང་།
 lcags mo byams ལུགས་མོ་བྱམས།
 lde tsha ལྡེ་ཚ།
 lde tsha bkra shis chos sdings ལྡེ་
 ཚ་བཀྲ་ཤེས་ཚས་སྡིངས།
 lha dkar bo ལྷ་དཀར་པོ།
 lha mo ལྷ་མོ།
 lha mo mtsho ལྷ་མོ་མཚོ།
 lha rgyal lo ལྷ་རྒྱལ་ལོ།
 Lhasa, lha sa ལྷ་ས།
 li thar rgyal ལི་ཐར་རྒྱལ།
 lo ལོ།
 lo chang ལོ་ཚང་།
 lo sar ལོ་སར།
 lo sar bzang ལོ་སར་བཟང་།

lo sar go re ལོ་སར་གོ་རེ།
 lo sar rgyal bo ལོ་སར་རྒྱལ་བོ།
 lud ལུད།
 ma ma མ་མ།
 ma Ni མ་ཎི།
 ma Ni dung sgrub gling མ་ཎི་དུང་སྐྱེ་བ་
 སྤྲིང་།
 mang chu མང་ཆུ།
 mang ra མང་ར།
 mang rdzong bod rigs shig gi mi
 tshe མང་རྫོང་བོད་རིགས་ཤིག་གི་མི་ཚོ།
 mar rdze མར་རྩེ།
 mchod rten མཚོད་རྟེན།
 mchod rten nyin མཚོད་རྟེན་ཉིན།
 mdo khams མདོ་ཁམས།
 mgo log མགོ་ལོག།
 mgo mang མགོ་མང།
 mgo mang chu མགོ་མང་ཆུ།
 mi gtsang ba མི་གཙང་བ།
 mkha' 'gro ma མཁའ་འགོ་མ།
 mkhan pa'i nyin མཁན་པའི་ཉིན།
 mkhar sngon po མཁར་སྔོན་པོ།
 mkhas btsun མཁས་བཙུན།
 mtsho མཚོ།
 mtsho byang མཚོ་བྱང།
 mtsho lho མཚོ་ལྷོ།
 mtsho mo མཚོ་མོ།

mtsho nub མཚོ་བུ།
 mtsho shar མཚོ་ཤར།
 mtsho sngon མཚོ་སྔོན།
 na gor mo ན་གོར་མོ།
 na nag ldang ན་ལྟང་ལྟང་།
 nag po skal bzang ནག་པོ་སྐལ་བཟང་།
 nag skor ནག་སྐོར།
 nags 'dabs ནགས་འདབས།
 nang so ནང་སོ།
 Nangchakja, snying lcags rgyal
 སྟོང་ཆུགས་རྒྱལ།
 ngag dbang blo bzang bstan 'dzin
 rgya mtsho ནག་དབང་བློ་བཟང་བསྟན་
 འཛིན་རྒྱུ་མཚོ།
 nor bu རོར་བུ།
 nyag rong ཉག་རོང་།
 nyin thub ཉིན་ཐུབ།
 nying khri ཉིང་ཁྲི།
 pad+ma rig 'dzin པདྨ་རིག་འཛིན།
 pad+ma yag པད་མ་ཡག།
 paN chen bla ma པཎ་ཅེན་བླ་མ།
 pha ma gnyis kyi sha ཕ་མ་གཉིས་ཀྱི་ཤ།
 phye leb ཕྱེ་ལེབ།
 phyug mo skyid ཕུག་མོ་སྦྱིད།
 ra 'gyig ར་འགྱིག།
 ra dmar ར་དམར།
 ra khya ring ར་ཁྱེ་རིང།

rab gnas རབ་གནས།
 rab gsal རབ་གསལ།
 reb gong རེབ་གོང།
 rdo la རྡོ་ལ།
 rdo ra'i gzhung རྡོ་རའི་གཞུང།
 rdo rje རྡོ་རྗེ།
 rdo rje dpal 'byor རྡོ་རྗེ་དཔལ་འབྱོར།
 rdo rje tshe brtan རྡོ་རྗེ་ཚེ་བརྟན།
 rdo ser རྡོ་ཤེར།
 rdor jag རྡོར་ཇག།
 rdza chu kha རྩ་ཅུ་ཀ་
 rin chen mtsho རིན་ཆེན་མཚོ།
 rin chen skyid རིན་ཆེན་སྦྱིད།
 rgan lung རན་ལུང།
 rgya dur rgyab རྒྱ་དུར་རྒྱལ།
 rgya mtsho རྒྱ་མཚོ།
 rgyal bo རྒྱལ་བོ།
 rgyal bo dmar drus རྒྱལ་བོ་དམར་དུས།
 rgyal bo rna bzhi རྒྱལ་བོ་ན་བཞི།
 rgyal bo tshes ru རྒྱལ་བོ་ཚེས་རུ།
 rgyal mtshan tshe ring རྒྱལ་མཚན་ཚེ་
 རིང།
 rgyal po རྒྱལ་པོ།
 rje btsun 'jigs med shes rab rgya
 mtsho རྗེ་བཙུན་འཇིགས་མེད་ཤེས་རབ་རྒྱ་མཚོ།
 rje ngag dbang blo bzang bstan
 'dzin rgya mtsho dpal bzang

po རྡོ་དག་དབང་ལྷོ་བཟང་བསྟན་འཛིན་བྱ་
 མཚོ་དཔལ་བཟང་པོ།
 rkang tsha རྒྱང་ཚ།
 rlung rta རླུང་རྟ།
 rma lho རམ་ལྷོ།
 rme rgan རེ་གན།
 rme rgan grwa tshang རེ་གན་གྲ་ཚང།
 rnam rgyal རྣམ་རྒྱལ།
 rnga ba རེ་བ།
 rnye རྟེ།
 rnye dgon bshad sgrub dar rgyas
 gling རྟེ་དགོན་བཤད་སྦྱབ་དར་རྒྱས་གླིང།
 rnying ba རྟིང་བ།
 rnying ma རྟིང་མ།
 rong bo རོང་བོ།
 rong brag རོང་བྲག།
 rta ra རྟ་ར།
 rtsam pa རུམ་པ།
 rtsam sgam རུམ་སྒམ།
 rtsang thur རུང་ཐུར།
 rtsis nag རུམ་ནག།
 ru phyor རུ་ཕྱོར།
 ru skor རུ་སྐོར།
 rung chung རུང་ཅུང།
 rgya nag ri bo rtse lnga རྒྱ་ནག་རི་བོ་
 རྩེ་ལ།

sa paN kun dga' rgyal mtshan

ས་པཎ་ཀུན་དགའ་རྒྱལ་མཚན།

sangs rgyas sman bla སངས་རྒྱལ་སྐུ་བླ།

sbyin pa བྱིན་པ།

sde ba སྡེ་བ།

sde pa སྡེ་པ།

sder kha སྡེར་ཁ།

sdom pa srung སྡོམ་པ་སྤྱང་།

sgrol kho སྐྱོལ་ཁོ།

sgrol ma mtsho སྐྱོལ་མ་མཚོ།

sha rang ཤ་རང་།

sha rus mi gtsang pa ཤ་རུས་མི་གཙང་པ།

sha sbrang ཤ་སྤྱང་།

shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa

stong phrag brgyad pa སེམ་རབ་

ཀྱི་པ་རོལ་རྟུ་ཕྱིན་པ་རྟོང་ཕྱག་བརྒྱད་པ།

si khron སི་ཁྲོན།

skal bzang skyid སྐལ་བཟང་སྐྱིད།

skal bzang tshe brtan སྐལ་བཟང་ཚེ་

བརྟན།

skam lung སྐམ་ལུང་།

ske ba སྐེ་བ།

ske rags bcing pa སྐེ་རགས་བཅིང་པ།

sku 'bum སུ་བུམ།

skyer pa སྐེར་པ།

skyid cig yod na rang gis khyer,

g.yang zhig yod na a mar zhog

སྐྱིད་ཅིག་ཡོད་ན་རང་གིས་ཁྱེད། གཡང་ཞིག་
ཡོད་ན་ཨ་མར་ཞོག།

smar khams སྐར་ཁམས།

smar khams mtshams khang

སྐར་ཁམས་མཚམས་ཁང་།

smyung gnas pa སྤྱུང་གནས་པ།

srong btsan sgam po སྲོང་བཙན་སྐམ་པོ།

srung ma སྤྱུང་མ།

srung rtags 'dogs pa སྤྱུང་རྟགས་འདྲགས་

པ།

stag dang gnyen ston la ming

chen po yod kyang, grang

ngar dang ltogs skom chen po

bzod dgos ལྷག་དང་གཉེན་སྟོན་ལ་མིང་

ཆེན་པོ་ཡོད་ཀྱང་། བྱང་དང་དང་སྟོགས་སྐྱོམ་

ཆེན་པོ་བཟོད་དགོས།

stag mo mtsho ལྷག་མོ་མཚོ།

stag ra ston mor mying che,

gyang ni ltogs ni de'i thu med

ལྷག་ར་སྟོན་མོར་མྱིང་ཆེ། བྱང་ནི་སྟོགས་ནི་དེ་ནི་

ཐུ་མེད།

ston chang སྟོན་ཆང་།

stong che སྟོང་ཆེ།

stong skor སྟོང་སྐོར།

sum mdo སུམ་མདོ།

thal wong ཐལ་འོང་།

thang ka ཐང་ཀ།

thang ta ཐང་ཏ།
 the'u rang ཐེ་འུ་རང་།
 thud ཐུད།
 Tsering Bum, tshe ring 'bum
 ཆོ་རིང་འབུམ།
 Tsering Samdrup, tshe ring
 bsam grub ཆོ་རིང་བསམ་གྲུབ།
 tsha ཅ།
 tsha nag ཅ་ནག
 tsha nag pad dkar chos gling
 ཅ་ནག་པད་དཀར་ཆོས་གླིང་།
 tshang ra ཅང་ར།
 tshe brtan sgrol ma ཅེ་བརྟན་སྒྲོལ་མ།
 tshe ring chos 'tsho ཅེ་རིང་ཆོས་འཚོ།
 tshe ring g.yang 'dzoms ཅེ་རིང་གཡང་
 འཛོམས།
 tshe ring lha mo ཅེ་རིང་ལྷ་མོ།
 tshe ring rdo rje ཅེ་རིང་རྩེ་རྩེ།
 tshe thar sgrol ma ཅེ་ཐར་སྒྲོལ་མ།
 tshogs gnyis 'phel rgyas gling
 ཆོགས་གཉིས་འཕེལ་རྒྱས་གླིང་།

tsong kha pa blo bzang grags pa
 ཙོང་ཁ་པ་བློ་བཟང་གྲགས་པ།
 ya...A zhang tshang, sku kyab ke
 bde mo yin na ཡ་ཨ་ཞང་ཚང་། སྐུ་
 ཀྱམ་གཤམ་མེ་ཡིན་ན།
 ya rdzi ཡ་རུ་རྩེ།
 yangs dus ཡངས་དུས།
 ye shes sgrol ma ཡེ་ཤེས་སྒྲོལ་མ།
 yug go ཡུག་གོ།
 yug po ཡུག་པོ།
 yul lha ཡུལ་ལྷ།
 yul lha thar ཡུལ་ལྷ་ཐར།
 yum dum pa bcu gnyis ཡུམ་དུམ་པ་
 བརྒྱ་གཉིས།
 zho ze'u ཞོ་ཟེ་འུ།
 zhun ཞུན།
 zhwa dmar dge 'dun bstan 'dzin
 rgya mtsho ཞ་དམར་དགེ་འདུན་བརྟན་
 འཛིན་རྒྱ་མཚོ།
 zi ling ཟི་ལིང་།
 zla ba sgrol ma ཟླ་བ་སྒྲོལ་མ།

CHINESE TERMS

- Aba 阿坝
 Ami Gedong 阿米格东
 Bai Gengdeng 白更登
 Bayan 巴燕
 Caigangban 彩钢板
 Cirenlamu 次仁拉姆
 Chanaihai 插乃亥
 Chizudezan 赤祖德赞
 Chuanwei Xiaochao 川味小炒
dadui 大队
 Dai 傣
 Dala 达拉
 Danba 丹巴
 Dangche 当车
 Dashui 大水
 Deng Xiaoping 邓小平
dibao 低保
 Dieka 叠卡
 Dongfeng 东风
 Dongke 东科
ganban 干拌
 Gangcha 岗察
ganguo tudoupian 干锅土豆片
 Gannan 甘南
 Gansu 甘肃
 Ganzi 甘孜
 Garang 尕让
garang mianpian 尕让面片
 Ge'ermu 格尔木
 Gesaer 格萨尔
 Gongbu 工布
 Gonghe 共和
 Guazi 瓜子
 Guide 贵德
 Guinan 贵南
 Guoluo 果洛
 Guomaying 过马营
 Haibei 海北
 Haidong 海东
 Hainan 海南
 Haixi 海西
 Halang 哈浪
 Hamairi 哈买日
 Han 汉
 Hexi 河西
 Hohhot, Huhehaote 呼和浩特
 Hongbao 红包
 Hu Jintao 胡锦涛
 Hualong 化隆
 Huangnan 黄南
 Huangzhong 湟中
 Huaqing Huadan Longmuhan
 华青华登隆木汉
 Hui 回
hupi lazi 虎皮辣子
 Huzhu 互助
 Jiang Zemin 江泽民
 Jianlibao 健力宝
 Jianzan Cairang 坚赞才让
 Jixiancairang 吉先才让
 Laoban 老板
 Lasa 拉萨
 Li Dechun 李得春
 Linzhi 林芝
 Liangshan 凉山
 Lianhua 莲花
 Lushaer 鲁沙尔
 Ma Bufang 马步芳

Mangla 茫拉
Mangqu 茫曲
Mao Zedong 毛泽东
Mashengan 麻什干
Meipai 美拍
Miao 苗
Ming 明
Minzu 民族
mu 亩
Mugansi 木干寺
Namuyi 纳木依
Nian Zhihai 年治海
Niangjijia 娘吉加
Pinyin 拼音
Qiecha 切察
Qing 清
Qinghai 青海
Qu 区
RMB 人民币
Salar, Sala 撒拉
Sanya 三亚
Seda 色达
Senduo 森多
Shagou 沙沟
Shanxi 山西
Shiqu 石渠

shousi baocai 手撕包菜
shouzhua yangrou 手抓羊肉
Sichuan 四川
Tongren 同仁
Tu 土
Wangshenke 旺什科
Weixin 微信
Wencheng 文成
Wutaishan 五台山
Wuwei 武威
Xi 习
Xi Jinping 习近平
Xiali 夏利
Xichang 西昌
Xining 西宁
Xinlong 新龙
Xintangshu·Tubozhuan 新唐
书·吐蕃传
Xunhua 循化
yangrou baozi 羊肉包子
Yi 依
Yuan 元
Yunnan 云南
Yunyan 云烟
Zanglinian 藏历年
zhuti 猪蹄

INDEX

- A che, 13, 40, 68, 69, 72, 74
 A dga', 40, 42, 69, 70, 71, 100, 101,
 113, 114, 170, 171, 172
 A kho, 40, 91, 200
 A lags 'ja' mo, 12, 34, 40, 62, 63, 67,
 194, 196
 A ma lcam Mountain, 29
 A mdo, 229
 A mdo Tibetan, 21, 24
 A pa lo, 13, 14, 20, 23, 28, 35, 40,
 41, 42, 44, 53, 54, 55, 60, 62, 63,
 66, 67, 69, 70, 71, 72, 79, 80, 81,
 88, 89, 90, 91, 95, 96, 97, 100,
 101, 109, 110, 111, 115, 119, 121,
 122, 123, 125, 128, 129, 130, 149,
 150, 152, 154, 155, 156, 157, 162,
 165, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172,
 182, 183, 184, 188, 189
 A pa lo lon, 13, 14, 20, 23, 28, 35,
 40, 44, 53, 54, 55, 60, 62, 63, 66,
 67, 69, 70, 71, 72, 79, 80, 81, 88,
 89, 90, 91, 95, 96, 97, 100, 101,
 109, 110, 111, 115, 119, 121, 122,
 123, 125, 128, 129, 130, 162, 165,
 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 182,
 183, 184, 188, 189
 Aba, 18, 237
 adobe, 13, 19, 22, 28, 39, 49, 87, 89,
 93, 97, 178, 185
 altar, 14, 19, 20, 29, 30, 60, 70, 101,
 104, 109, 137, 178, 179, 181, 203,
 205, 219
 Amdo, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 223, 225, 227,
 229
 Ami Gedong, 213, 237
 apple, 67, 72, 81, 168
 ash, 24, 99, 121, 188
 Astasahastrika Prajna Paramita,
 38
 Bab rus, 30
 Bai Gengdeng, 227, 237
 baking, 9, 50, 213
 barley, 23, 26, 29, 53, 71, 179, 212,
 219
 Bayan, 46, 237
 Bde b+he, 40, 151
 Bdud shul klu ba, 46
 beer, 124, 145
 behavior, 9
 beverage, 50, 51, 135
 birth, 149, 162, 180, 189
 birthday, 19, 68, 121, 152, 192
Bka' 'gyur, 38, 194
 bla ma, 13, 20, 38, 40, 42, 47, 56,
 61, 62, 63, 64, 66, 67, 69, 70, 71,
 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 99, 164, 168,
 177, 192, 196, 229, 233
 Bla ma 'Tsham pa, 30
 blanket, 67, 69
 blind, 43, 151
 Blo bzang bstan 'dzin rgya mtsho,
 47
 Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, 46
 Blo rgya, 44, 45

brang 'go, 13, 77, 85, 86, 104, 230
 bread, 8, 12, 13, 14, 19, 26, 39, 49,
 50, 52, 53, 55, 57, 58, 59, 60, 67,
 100, 101, 105, 107, 109, 118, 121,
 168, 178, 180, 184, 187, 188, 196,
 203, 207, 213, 214, 215, 219
 bride, 14, 15, 129, 130, 131, 132,
 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 140, 141,
 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 154, 156,
 157, 158, 159, 187, 210
bsang khri, 13, 60, 87, 88, 93, 230
 Bshad sgrub, 16, 41, 91, 99, 115,
 116, 163, 176, 194, 203, 204, 205,
 206, 207, 208
 Bsod nams tshe ring, 40, 73, 77,
 116, 117
 Bstan 'dzin rgya mtsho, 47
 Btsan mgon thar, 40, 44, 53, 110,
 111
 Btsun mo yag, 40, 53, 57
 Btsun thar, 41, 43, 177, 178, 179,
 180, 184, 185
 Bu lo, 19, 41
 Buddha, 20, 38, 89, 96, 105, 212,
 215, 219
 Buddhist, 7, 31, 38, 214, 222, 227
 butter, 20, 26, 27, 51, 53, 77, 80, 81,
 83, 84, 105, 109, 192, 194, 204,
 205
 Bya stod ske chu gar dkar ya khul,
 47
 cabinet, 55, 125
 cafeteria, 25, 26
 Caigangban, 237
 cake, 2, 19, 79, 80
 candies, 19, 22, 50, 53, 67, 70, 72,
 80, 89, 91, 98, 100, 101, 109, 112,
 116, 123, 135, 179, 183
 carpet, 168
 cattle, 28
 celebration, 6, 7, 68, 153, 211, 213,
 216, 217, 220
 Central Tibet, 18, 224
 Chab 'gag rdo rje tshe ring, 213,
 221
 Chairman Mao, 43
 chanting, 14, 19, 62, 63, 70, 71, 72,
 75, 100, 109, 128, 133, 137, 143,
 149, 163, 164, 177, 183, 188, 194,
 195, 201, 203, 205, 206, 207
 children, 2, 9, 22, 26, 27, 51, 52, 87,
 109, 114, 151, 162, 173, 176, 177,
 179, 185, 188, 190, 193, 195, 209,
 210
 China, 3, 4, 8, 12, 18, 21, 33, 41, 42,
 43, 44, 55, 68, 89, 96, 101, 218,
 222, 224, 225, 226
 Chos mtsho skyid, 41
 cigarette, 51, 52, 72
 Cirenlamu, 215, 224
 clothes, 2, 22, 78, 88, 104, 109, 122,
 149, 166, 173, 177, 178, 179, 180,
 201, 213, 215
 coal, 67, 150
 combine, 29
 communication, 7
 compulsory, 3
 conch shell, 20, 55, 105, 109
 conversation, 3, 15, 22, 73, 129,
 134, 144, 152, 155, 157, 158, 170,

172, 173, 182, 183, 192, 196
 coral, 168, 180
 courtyard, 50, 52, 131, 178
 cultural, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9
 culture, 5, 7, 9, 31, 218
 D+hiH tsha, 46, 98
 dairy products, 26
 Danba, 213, 214, 237
 dawn, 52
 daybreak, 14, 21, 120, 129
 deaf, 20, 51, 177
 death, 6, 19, 53, 62, 71, 72, 128,
 162, 176, 183, 199
 deity, 89, 96, 100, 164, 192, 217
 Deity of Wealth, 157
 demon, 112
 Deng Xiaoping, 41, 89, 237
 Dga' skyid lha mo, 23, 41, 44, 53,
 54, 67, 79, 80, 81, 82, 89, 90, 91,
 96, 101, 110, 111, 189, 200
 Dge 'dun chos 'phel, 38
 Dge lugs, 46, 47, 48, 52
dgu rgyags, 87, 89, 90, 91, 92, 103,
 230
 diary, 6, 8, 20, 212
 disaster, 177, 205
 divination, 6, 91, 188, 201, 205,
 206, 213
 Dkon mchog dge legs, 3
 Dkon mchog rgya mtsho, 41, 43,
 154
 dough, 12, 49, 57, 58, 59, 79, 80, 91,
 171, 188, 213, 214, 216
 Dpa' lung, 46
 Dpal ldan lha mo, 52
 Dpal rgyal, 2, 10, 20, 41, 57, 58, 59,
 85, 119, 159, 225
 drinking, 7, 9, 19, 51, 124, 125, 126,
 151, 152, 167
 dumplings, 13, 14, 15, 51, 56, 61,
 71, 77, 79, 80, 81, 82, 89, 90, 91,
 102, 116, 117, 122, 124, 127, 131,
 132, 134, 138, 139, 151, 156, 158,
 162, 171, 173, 174, 184, 204, 207,
 215
 DVD, 68
 Dzam b+ha lha, 157
 eating, 7, 9, 53, 54, 56, 65, 91, 100,
 114, 124, 131, 149, 153, 205, 207
 ecological, 3
 economic, 3, 5, 6
 education, 3, 30
 electricity, 6, 8, 13, 68, 89, 96, 122,
 173, 209
 enclosure, 3, 29, 39, 55, 191
 entourage, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134,
 145, 154
 escort, 66, 155, 156
 ethnographic, 4, 6, 32
 fencing, 28, 29
 fire, 19, 20, 66, 67, 87, 103, 104,
 109, 121, 150, 163, 176, 178, 179,
 188, 203, 204, 207
 flashlight, 52, 104, 105, 112
 folktale, 211
 food, 6, 8, 13, 14, 15, 19, 20, 23, 26,
 38, 50, 51, 60, 64, 66, 67, 69, 70,
 71, 72, 73, 79, 81, 84, 88, 90, 91,
 95, 98, 99, 100, 101, 105, 109,
 113, 114, 116, 122, 123, 124, 126,

127, 135, 136, 149, 151, 170, 173,
174, 190, 193, 209, 210, 213, 214,
215, 219
freezer, 68
fruit, 22, 50, 51, 60, 101, 122, 125,
178, 196, 200
frying, 9, 12, 57, 214, 215
funeral, 6
Gabriela Samcewicz, 11
Gansu, 18, 21, 215, 221, 227, 237
gender, 3, 32
Gengqiu Gelai, 3
Gesang Nuobu, 6
Glang sgron skyid, 42, 168, 170
global village, 32
Gnam lha mkhar, 42, 152, 154
Gnam lha thar, 42, 69, 71
Gnam mtsho, 42, 53, 162, 163
gold, 67, 168, 215
good fortune, 63, 68, 70, 73, 91, 99,
121, 156, 179, 191, 212, 220
Google, 32
gos sku, 16, 193, 194, 195, 198, 231
granddaughter, 23, 53, 68, 150,
168
grass, 27, 29, 54, 87, 121, 206
grassland, 9, 27, 28, 30
gro ma, 13, 72, 77, 79, 80, 81, 83,
192, 231, 233
guest room, 13, 14, 20, 38, 66, 67,
89, 95, 109, 110, 114, 123, 124,
126, 129, 130, 134, 136, 144, 149,
150, 151, 152, 154, 155, 193
Guide, 12, 19, 227, 237
Guinan, 4, 8, 12, 21, 33, 237

Guoluo, 18, 45, 237
Hainan, 8, 12, 18, 31, 33, 237
hair, 19, 26, 28, 39, 68, 78, 90, 103,
104, 111, 128, 129, 154, 162, 166,
172, 173, 207, 212
Halang Tribe, 47
Hamairi Mountain, 46
harmony, 9
harvest, 211, 215, 219, 220
health, 9, 21, 29, 38, 87, 98, 99, 101,
122, 152, 220
Himalayan, 18
holy water, 13
home community, 4, 19, 23, 25, 31,
53, 68, 69, 77, 102, 121, 130, 131,
135, 150, 154, 155, 157, 172, 179,
182, 187, 188, 209
homework, 128
*Hopes, Gatherings, and New
Beginnings*, 3, 4, 8
horse, 7, 27, 28, 100, 152, 199, 200
horserace, 6, 9, 16, 19, 30, 199, 200,
201, 202, 209
housework, 3
housing, 6, 9, 30
Hu Jintao, 42, 89, 237
hu tse, 15, 22, 38, 39, 49, 56, 90,
104, 111, 149, 151, 153, 154, 155,
170, 173, 174, 204, 231
Hualong, 46, 237
Huangnan, 18, 237
Huangzhong, 48, 237
Huaqing Huadan Longmuhan,
47, 237
Hui, 21, 46, 237

humor, 9
 ill, 9, 62, 64, 91, 100, 157, 173
 illness, 7, 62, 183
 inauspicious, 19, 102, 117, 164, 165
 incense, 14, 19, 20, 29, 30, 53, 60, 67, 70, 87, 98, 101, 104, 109, 110, 128, 130, 131, 137, 163, 177, 178, 179, 203, 205, 215, 217
 incense altar, 20, 30, 109, 178
 inequality, 3
 Japan, 68
 Jiang Zemin, 42, 89, 237
 Jo jo lha khang, 46
 Jo khang, 12, 19, 36, 46, 151, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180
 Jo le, 42, 68
 juniper, 29, 105, 179, 192
 Kelsang Norbu, 6
kha btags, 14, 15, 50, 52, 60, 70, 71, 72, 73, 76, 104, 110, 113, 114, 115, 116, 118, 122, 123, 129, 132, 133, 145, 146, 149, 150, 151, 152, 156, 180, 196, 204, 232
 Khri ka, 12, 19, 27, 30, 31, 36, 42, 45, 46, 47, 48, 85, 151, 162, 165, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 189, 205, 210
Klu 'bum mi rgod, 102, 222, 227
 Klu kho, 42, 191
 Klu skyabs rgyal, 16, 35, 42, 121, 170, 171, 173, 175
 Klu thar rgyal, 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 15, 19, 20, 25, 30, 42, 45, 152, 225, 226
 Klu tshang, 16, 19, 34, 40, 46, 62, 182, 191, 194, 198
 Klu tshang bshad sgrub dge 'phel gling, 46
 Klu tshang Monastery, 16, 19, 34, 40, 62, 63, 182, 191, 194, 198
 knife, 51
 Konchok Gelek, 3
 Kun thar skyid, 2, 10, 43
lab tse, 29, 30, 60, 163, 164, 229, 232
 lambskin, 20, 104, 109, 113
 laughing, 7, 79, 82, 123, 124, 126, 199
 Lcags byams rgyal, 43, 177, 178, 179
 Lcags mo byams, 15, 25, 43, 44, 149, 153
 Lde tsha, 46
 Lha dkar bo, 46, 180
 Lha mo mtsho, 10, 20, 43
 Lha sa, 27, 31, 45, 210, 215, 216, 217
 Li Jianfu, 7, 226
 Li Yuqin, 213, 226
 Lianhua Mountain, 48
 Libu Lakhi, 7, 218, 226
 Limusishiden, 9, 192, 226
 liquor, 8, 14, 50, 51, 77, 81, 100, 101, 107, 117, 124, 126, 130, 132, 133, 134, 135, 141, 142, 145, 152, 155, 178, 179, 200, 213, 216
 Litaijia, 1
 livestock, 3, 19, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 38, 49, 63, 68, 70, 78, 99,

101, 102, 104, 111, 112, 113, 116,
 123, 150, 154, 165, 166, 167, 168,
 170, 171, 172, 185, 187, 191, 193,
 194, 206, 212
 Lo sar, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 12, 13, 14,
 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 31, 32, 38, 39,
 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57,
 58, 60, 61, 62, 63, 67, 72, 73, 76,
 77, 79, 80, 81, 84, 87, 88, 89, 91,
 95, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103,
 104, 105, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113,
 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120,
 121, 122, 124, 125, 128, 130, 131,
 149, 150, 151, 152, 157, 158, 162,
 163, 164, 165, 170, 171, 172, 177,
 178, 182, 183, 184, 190, 192, 193,
 194, 196, 200, 201, 203, 209, 210,
 212, 213, 214, 215, 219, 220, 221,
 222, 223, 225, 227, 228
 lock, 78
 love songs, 15, 113, 134, 146, 147,
 148, 155, 156, 160, 188, 189
 Lushaer, 48, 237
 Ma ma, 13, 14, 43, 44, 53, 54, 55,
 62, 64, 67, 69, 74, 77, 79, 80, 81,
 82, 89, 90, 101, 110, 111, 113,
 119, 120, 121, 128, 162, 163, 165,
 170, 171, 172, 173, 182, 188, 189,
 190, 200
 Mang ra, 4, 12, 18, 20, 21, 23, 24,
 33, 45, 46, 47, 214, 215
 Mao Zedong, 43, 89
 marriage, 6, 7, 42, 52, 102, 152,
 154, 162, 168, 186, 189
 mask, 134
mchod khang, 38
mchod rten, 178, 233
 meat, 7, 8, 26, 38, 39, 51, 67, 68, 70,
 71, 72, 90, 101, 107, 113, 114,
 121, 162, 173, 178, 179, 181, 184,
 196, 200, 203, 205, 207
 MeiPai, 32
 Mgo log, 18, 45, 79, 212
 Mgo mang, 12, 18, 20, 23, 24, 25,
 35, 45, 47, 214
 midnight, 19, 21, 22, 73, 101, 103,
 104, 109, 162
 milk, 20, 26, 51, 52, 53, 55, 77, 98,
 107, 109, 113, 114, 125, 134, 149,
 151, 152, 168, 172, 178, 184, 185,
 189, 192, 196, 207
 Ming Dynasty, 46, 47
 Mkhar sngon po, 42, 183
 Mkhas btsun, 43, 113
 mobile pastoralism, 3
 modernity, 3, 30
 monastery, 24, 46, 47, 62, 66, 69,
 98, 99, 116, 176, 192, 193, 194,
 195, 203
 money, 27, 78, 98, 114, 117, 154,
 156, 157, 172, 184, 196, 200, 206,
 209
 Mongghul, 8, 9, 226
 monk, 19, 21, 41, 62, 76, 91, 98,
 154, 195, 196, 217
 mother, 3, 6, 10, 19, 40, 41, 42, 43,
 44, 49, 51, 53, 60, 62, 68, 80, 87,
 103, 104, 115, 121, 149, 156, 162,
 176, 177, 178, 183, 201
 motorcycle, 22, 50, 52, 78, 99, 100,

110, 122, 123, 167, 172
 mountain deities, 14, 19, 130, 133,
 142, 200, 214
 mountain deity, 9
 movie, 190
 Mtsho byang, 18
 Mtsho lho, 4, 7, 12, 17, 18, 21, 33,
 45, 213, 214, 221, 222
 Mtsho sngon, 12, 18, 21, 33, 45,
 214, 215, 221, 222
 mu, 28, 29
 Muslim, 78, 79, 150, 154, 199
 mutton, 56, 80, 81, 89, 90, 102, 116,
 131, 158, 204, 207
 Namuyi, 7, 218, 238
 Nang so, 46
 Nangchakja, 18, 215, 227, 233
 Nor bu, 14, 43, 44, 122, 123, 124,
 126, 127, 128, 129
 Number Two Nationalities
 Middle School, 23
 Number Two Provincial Hospital,
 35
 offerings, 19, 60, 64, 105, 109, 179,
 196, 204, 214
 omen, 72, 149, 192, 201
 ornaments, 168
 Pad+ma yag, 44, 124, 167
 painting, 14, 88, 103, 104, 108
 pasture, 21, 22, 24, 27, 29, 53, 54,
 55, 65, 79, 80, 87, 100, 110, 122,
 151, 156, 163, 166, 169, 182, 184,
 207
 Pepsi, 101, 124, 125, 151
'Phags pa brgyad stong ba, 38,

194
'Pho lung, 34, 62, 70, 71
 phone, 15, 21, 31, 62, 63, 66, 68, 78,
 92, 104, 113, 124, 133, 135, 147,
 158, 177, 186, 188, 200, 201, 218
 Phyug mo skyid, 41, 44, 110, 188,
 189, 190
 pilgrimage, 12, 19, 27, 36, 176, 177,
 178, 182, 218
 pilgrims, 176, 178, 180, 194, 195
 porch, 64, 79, 82, 123, 124, 126,
 129, 134, 145, 148, 155
 potatoes, 81, 90, 184, 185
 prayer, 13, 14, 30, 88, 89, 96, 97, 98,
 99, 100, 106, 184, 194, 205
 prayer flag, 89, 97
 proverb, 135, 213
 Qinghai, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 18, 21, 33, 227,
 238
 Rab gsal, 47
 Rdo rje, 8, 10, 19, 24, 44, 66, 85,
 112, 227
 Rdo ser, 23, 25, 27, 28, 40, 45, 112,
 165
 Rdor jag, 18, 25, 40, 42, 226
 Reb gong, 47, 225
 relatives, 6, 7, 8, 9, 20, 23, 25, 30,
 39, 52, 62, 63, 64, 69, 78, 80, 101,
 102, 103, 104, 111, 116, 117, 122,
 124, 126, 129, 131, 134, 135, 140,
 148, 150, 152, 156, 157, 160, 162,
 163, 170, 172, 176, 186, 187, 193,
 194, 199, 209, 210, 216, 219
 religious, 6, 7, 8, 9, 19, 30, 31, 46,
 71, 91, 193, 216, 217, 218

resource, 8
 restaurant, 15, 78, 157, 158, 161, 183, 184
 reunions, 7
 Rgya mtsho, 15, 43, 44, 149, 153, 154, 155
rgyal bo, 13, 14, 49, 50, 52, 59, 60, 100, 104, 110, 113, 114, 115, 116, 118, 122, 123, 149, 150, 151, 152, 180, 233, 234
 Rin chen mkhar, 4
 ritual, 16, 34, 64, 66, 70, 71, 74, 76, 91, 99, 134, 164, 192, 193, 194, 197, 203, 206, 207, 212, 214
 Rje btsun 'jigs med shes rab rgya mtsho, 42
 Rje ngag dbang blo bzang bstan 'dzin rgya mtsho dpal bzang po, 47
 Rma lho, 18
 RMB, 23, 26, 29, 30, 39, 50, 52, 55, 63, 64, 71, 72, 78, 99, 104, 110, 113, 114, 115, 117, 124, 131, 149, 150, 151, 152, 156, 157, 162, 163, 168, 169, 170, 172, 177, 178, 180, 183, 186, 187, 194, 199, 200, 207, 238
 Rme rgan Monastery, 30
 Rnam rgyal, 14, 44, 128, 136
 Rnye dgon bshad sgrub dar rgyas gling, 46
 Rnying ba, 18, 40, 42, 43
 Rnying ma, 47
 Rong bo Monastery, 47
 rooster, 88, 212
 rural, 3, 6, 32
 Sa paN kun dga' rgyal mtshan, 46
 sand, 30, 77
 Sangs rgyas bkra shis, 8
Sangs rgyas sman bla, 38, 194
 Sarge, 11
 Sbyin pa, 47
 scholars, 4, 38
 scripture, 62, 70, 128, 194, 196, 205
 Senduo, 46, 238
 settled, 3, 18, 183
 Sgrol kho, 11
 Sgrol ma mtsho, 44
 sheep, 3, 13, 16, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 64, 65, 77, 78, 79, 80, 85, 87, 88, 90, 94, 95, 98, 99, 100, 103, 110, 113, 115, 122, 131, 134, 135, 138, 139, 150, 156, 166, 167, 170, 172, 179, 184, 186, 187, 189, 190, 191, 192, 197, 201, 203, 214, 215, 220
 silver earrings, 168
 singer, 15, 125, 146, 160, 161, 188, 189
 Skal bzang nor bu, 6
 Sku 'bum, 48, 171, 176, 180, 182
 Smar khams, 41, 45, 47, 91, 99, 115, 194, 221
 smartphone, 135, 188, 190
 smartphones, 6, 8, 123, 131, 158, 209
 smoke, 51, 54, 70, 105, 129, 150, 163, 179, 181, 192, 212
 Smra khams mtshams khang, 47

social, 3, 6, 7, 9, 23, 30, 31, 62, 63, 80
 social change, 6
 social media, 6, 7, 30, 31
 society, 3
 soil, 19, 28, 87, 88, 91, 93, 109, 207
 soup, 14, 26, 71, 90, 122, 124, 127, 134, 138, 156, 162
 spinach, 81
 Stag mo mtsho, 15, 42, 43, 44, 121, 122, 123, 125, 130, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174
 steamer tray, 12, 13, 58, 61
 stove, 19, 38, 39, 49, 51, 52, 53, 64, 66, 67, 77, 80, 87, 98, 102, 103, 104, 121, 123, 128, 130, 149, 150, 168, 169, 176, 188, 204, 212
 straw, 13, 39, 55, 63, 65, 77, 98, 100
 study, 4, 7, 31, 91, 211, 218
 stupa, 178
 sub-brigade, 26, 28
 sugar, 67, 69, 77, 80, 81, 90, 157, 193, 213
 suicide, 19, 101, 111, 154, 162, 164
 Sum mdo, 46
 taboo, 70
 tantric practitioner, 14, 43, 91, 113, 143
 tea, 8, 19, 20, 49, 51, 52, 53, 56, 64, 67, 70, 72, 78, 79, 98, 100, 102, 104, 105, 107, 109, 110, 113, 114, 116, 120, 121, 123, 124, 125, 126, 129, 131, 132, 134, 135, 139, 150, 152, 155, 163, 168, 171, 177, 178, 184, 186, 189, 196, 203, 213
 television, 6, 125, 182
 Thailand, 31
 Thang ta, 18, 25, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 68, 226
thud, 77, 79, 80, 81, 100, 101, 107, 121, 134, 168, 170, 171, 172, 203, 236
 Tibet, 18, 21, 45, 211, 212, 216, 217, 219, 220, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228
 Tibetan, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 15, 17, 18, 19, 21, 23, 24, 27, 30, 31, 32, 33, 38, 45, 50, 55, 68, 77, 80, 88, 98, 102, 104, 121, 125, 157, 158, 161, 163, 183, 189, 193, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228
 Tibetan Calendar, 211, 212, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 224, 225, 226, 228
 Tibetan New Year, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 18, 19, 211, 213, 215, 224
 Tibetan studies, 4, 8
 Tibetan Studies, 8, 18, 224
 Tibetosphere, 4, 19
 Tongren, 47, 238
 toponyms, 24, 31
 town, 19, 21, 28, 30, 46, 49, 53, 54, 62, 64, 66, 68, 77, 78, 79, 98, 100, 101, 110, 116, 122, 124, 129, 130, 150, 151, 154, 157, 158, 162, 163, 168, 169, 171, 172, 182, 183, 184, 185, 187, 188, 200, 203
 tradition, 3, 49, 50, 209, 211

traditional lifestyles, 6
 transition, 5
 transportation, 7, 182
 Tsering Bum, 18, 91, 214, 226, 228, 236
 Tsering Samdrup, 18, 100, 214, 228, 236
 Tsha nag Community, 23, 24, 25, 26, 28, 35, 40, 41, 44, 45
 Tsha nag Dadui, 26
tshang ra, 13, 77, 85, 236
 Tshe ring rdo rje, 44, 155
 Tshe thar sgrol ma, 57
 Tshogs gnyis 'phel rgyas gling, 47
 Tsong kha pa blo bzang grags pa, 48
 TV, 21, 38, 54, 55, 68, 104, 125, 162, 209, 218
 urban, 3, 9
 vajra, 206
 values, 6, 23
 vehicle, 69, 128, 130, 167, 187
 washing machine, 68
 weak, 9, 28, 39, 62, 99, 124, 179, 199
 WeChat, 7, 9, 21, 63, 66, 88, 92, 98, 104, 117, 135, 162, 170, 172, 186, 187, 188, 209, 210
 wedding, 5, 8, 14, 15, 23, 43, 44, 102, 111, 121, 122, 124, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 141, 144, 147, 148, 149, 152, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 160, 161, 187, 209, 215
 Western, 4, 223
 wife, 15, 40, 44, 52, 53, 57, 68, 72, 102, 113, 114, 116, 151, 152, 153, 170, 184, 185, 186, 187
 winter, 18, 23, 24, 28, 29, 39, 53, 54, 55, 65, 66, 79, 80, 87, 99, 100, 113, 122, 165, 166, 167, 182, 184, 199, 209
 Xi Jinping, 44, 89
 yak, 13, 19, 26, 28, 39, 68, 86, 90, 101, 103, 104, 107, 113, 121, 122, 134, 151, 166, 172, 185, 188, 212
 Yangs dus Community, 12, 36, 41
 Year of the Dog, 72, 84, 88, 108
 Yellow River, 47, 103
 yogurt, 26, 38, 134, 138, 168, 172, 184, 207, 212
 youth, 9, 209, 210
 Yuan Dynasty, 47
 Yul lha, 16, 19, 29, 30, 36, 44, 48, 52, 60, 130, 179, 180, 181, 187, 188, 201, 204, 205
 Yul lha Temple, 16, 36, 48, 53, 180, 181
 Yul lha thar, 44
Yum dum pa bcu gnyis, 38, 194
zhun, 13, 77, 79, 81, 84, 100, 101, 104, 107, 116, 121, 203, 236
 Zhwa dmar dge 'dun bstan 'dzin rgya mtsho, 46
 Zi ling, 12, 18, 21, 27, 28, 35, 38, 45, 48, 73, 77, 78, 121, 122, 123, 125, 128, 129, 130, 158, 168, 171, 172, 173, 182, 183, 222, 223
 Zla ba bstan 'dzin, 7
 Zla ba sgrol ma, 40, 44, 54, 91, 111,

113, 200